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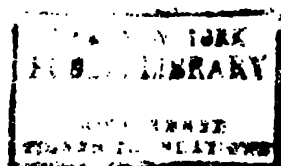
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THE MAN WHO WON







“MR. HARRISON WAS GLARING AT HIM”
(See page 313)

1878

Life and Adventures
of Younger M. Hanson

1878

Not
Jan. 2
ds

THE MAN WHO WON

OR

The Career and Adventures
of the Younger Mr. Harrison

By

LEON D. HIRSCH

ILLUSTRATED

By

WILLIAM VAN DRESSER



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TO
CHARLES H. GALLAGHER
WHOSE FRIENDSHIP AND LOYALTY THROUGH
THE YEARS HAVE MADE POSSIBLE THE
WRITING OF THIS BOOK



CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE ELDER MR. HARRISON . . .	I
II	THE YOUNGER MR. HARRISON . . .	20
III	A TEST FOR HIS SOUL . . .	36
IV	CONGENIAL EMPLOYMENT . . .	46
V	JOYS AND A REBUFF . . .	57
VI	DORIS INTRUDES . . .	69
VII	IN THE REALM OF THE HEART . .	79
VIII	THE SHERIFF'S METHODS . . .	89
IX	A REVOLT IN THE FAMILY . . .	105
X	AT THE MILL STREAM . . .	117
XI	SHE CHOOSES TO RELENT . . .	124
XII	THE DOMESTIC MOTIF . . .	135
XIII	MRS. HARRISON TAKES HOLD . .	147
XIV	A MATTER OF SOCIAL STRATA . .	160
XV	THE SHERIFF MAKES A HAUL . . .	170
XVI	BREWSTER ENTERS THE LISTS . .	185
XVII	POLITICS AND THE LADY . . .	191
XVIII	CORONER WILMOT'S FRIENDSHIP .	202
XIX	AN ALLIANCE WITH THE BLATCH- FORDS . . .	209
XX	OUTGROWING OLD FRIENDS . . .	218
XXI	EMBARRASSMENTS . . .	227
XXII	TWO TRIUMPHS . . .	239

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIII CHIEFLY BLISS	250
XXIV A CONCESSION TO MATILDA	264
XXV LOYALTY IN PRACTICE	277
XXVI SORROWS COME TO EMILY	288
XXVII CUPID'S PLATFORM	301
XXVIII MULLS GETS A GROOMING	308
XXIX THE GALEVILLE "STAR" SUCCUMBS	316
XXX AS WOMAN WILLS IT	324
XXXI CLASHES	334
XXXII AT THE RIVER	347
XXXIII THE HONOR OF A HARRISON	354
XXXIV DEFEAT FOR THE VICTOR	368
XXXV VICTORY FOR THE DEFEATED	382



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
"MR. HARRISON WAS GLARING AT HIM." (<i>See</i> <i>page 313</i>)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"ALICE LANE ON TOP OF A BOWLDER"	119
"MRS. HARRISON JUST STARED"	238
"IT WAS A DIRTY, HAGGARD CREW"	362





THE MAN WHO WON

CHAPTER I

THE ELDER MR. HARRISON

EDWARD HARRISON stood at the wide office window and surveyed the roof tops of Telford City — his city. Not *his* solely by reason of residence, but as an item of personal possession. He owned Telford City. Sundry persons who had doubted it, and put the doubt to the test, had been bowled over by the electorate,— a dependable, unswerving electorate which had ratified Edward Harrison's will for the past eight years. Of course, here and there, sedition was preached and revolutionary fires smoldered, but his rule continued to be iron-rivetted. No man or men had been able to shake loose his hold on the vote.

From the three windows in Harrison's office in the sky-scraping First National Bank Building three views of Telford City could be obtained. To the north, his gaze rested upon smoke-fogged factories,

2 THE MAN WHO WON

packing yards, railroad sidings, and cinder banks. Here also were the tumble-down hovels that housed the unskilled of the factory workers as well as the city's offscum who knew no employment. The name of Edward Harrison was exalted in these dim districts. Here he had put to use practical politics — good politics. In the jargons of Europe as well as in slum English, he had been acclaimed a benefactor of man. His political philanthropy, while not virtue exactly, had the effect of virtue. A whisper to the committing police court judge prevented a trip up-river to the stone pile for many a hapless knave. His demand upon favored city contractors, to employ a submitted list of voting Huns and Slovaks, had the power of statute. It was done, even at the peril of a profitless contract. City contracts came from him; obedience to him kept the supply open. Then he had a faculty of opening institutional portals to admit the sick and needy whom he recommended. Thus, in North Telford, where mankind lay prone when stricken with poverty or illness, the benefactions of Boss Edward Harrison (however attenuated by self-interest), fell like sunlight upon the cold hearthstones of misfortune — to be gratefully repaid during the hours of the poll each November.

Away to the west stretched the homes of Telford City citizens — streets upon streets of two-

THE ELDER MR. HARRISON 3

and-a-half-story brick houses, porched, roofed, and with small front-gardens of palling sameness. Many were the homes of clerks, bookkeepers, shipping assistants and mill and store employees, who, in goodly number, were likely to take their views of government from their employers. And there was no revolt against Harrison among employers. He was known to be a friend of Business and could be reached, when necessity called, by innumerable little wires of business influence radiating from the banks, the mercantile clubs, the noon-hour eating cabals, and the inner, dominating cliques of the bigger lodges and church boards.

Farther toward the park were the gaudy roofs of houses where the men dwelt who paid wages in Telford City. There was no dissent here with Edward Harrison. He dared go a great way with misgovernment before the smug morals of Telford Park Terrace would take offense.

Harrison's pleased eye shifted to the imposing granite pile near the river—the County Court House. There, comfortably ensconced amidst thick carpets and mahogany, was his man, the high sheriff of Keaslake County, who submitted jury lists to him for editing; and his other men, the county attorney, whom he could bring scampering to his office in ten minutes by telephonic summons, and the county court judge, whom he called “Billy”

4 THE MAN WHO WON

when they were closeted in the Harrison library on quiet, mysterious nights.

In the glistening marble building two squares away — the newly built City Hall — was also his man, the mayor, and likewise meek servitors, the controlling majority in the City Council.

Once again he walked the office floor, and through the windows viewed his field of power that stood forth so palpitant and real in the panorama of roofs and smokestacks, slits of alleys and black gullies of streets.

He was tired and his head ached monstrously. Since luncheon he had been bothered by a horde of suppliants of high and low degree, all seeking his benignant intercession in some vital concern of their own. Fathers seeking preferment for sons, women appealing for charity, master builders hunting slices of municipal work, wobbly merchants begging money loans, suffragists calling for political aid, anti-suffragists ditto, clergymen urging a police shake-up, saloonkeepers suggesting a loosening of the Sunday code,—such had been a part of his afternoon problems.

It suddenly flashed upon him that he had an engagement to dine with Henry Mulls. Henry was a representative of Big Business, and his dinner (pivoting upon the words, "to meet Mrs. Graydon"), must be attended at all costs. Who was

THE ELDER MR. HARRISON 5

Mrs. Graydon, he wondered. Mentally he checked off the probable guests: the Clydes, the Atwells, the McClintocks,— a heavy-eating, wholesome set of manufacturers and storekeepers. Among them were some who sometimes found grammar and polished floors disconcerting. But Harrison knew that these stalwarts constituted the motive force that kept Telford City's business whizzing. As a matter of fact, he had a very friendly feeling toward them, although he detested formal dinners.

Well, it had to be done, that was all. Mulls must have his triumph. Accordingly Harrison set forth for home—afoot, as was his wont, for he was trying to prevent a too conspicuous rotundity of waistcoat that would ill become his somewhat squat figure. Furthermore, this appearance on the streets brought him thirty to forty salutations to the half hour, amenities that were calculated to keep friendly feeling alive in just as many hearts. Harrison knew not psychology, but its fruits were his.

A few minutes before seven o'clock his car rolled up to the Mulls' residence. A flunkey at the curbstone aided him to alight. Another footman was mounting guard at the front door. Already Harrison was becoming oppressed with the feeling that the affair was to be a terrific splurge. The air in the hallway was heavy with the perfume of flowers. From the upper rooms could be heard the chatter

of women exchanging greetings. There was an ominous sing-song droning in the drawing-room that struck terror to Harrison's soul. To be thrust into the midst of criss-cross small talk for several hours loomed a harrowing prospect. However, in due course he bowed himself into the animated *mêlée* and walked over to the receiving party. Henry Mulls shook his hand cordially, and passed him to Mrs. Mulls, who greeted him enthusiastically. Edward Harrison was then presented to Mrs. Graydon, the honored guest, who welcomed him adoringly — and held him. Mrs. Graydon glanced about the room and observed that there was a lull in the conversation immediately after Harrison entered, and that his casual nods were being returned with deference. There was no doubt of it: Mr. Harrison was the individual of first interest to-night.

"I've been very anxious to meet you, Mr. Harrison," began Mrs. Graydon. "Even in New York we read about you."

"Ah!"

"But you don't look a bit as I imagined."

"Indeed."

"No. . . . I've seen several cartoons of you — the familiar old libel — undershot jaw, retreating forehead, half-chewed cigar, diamond shirt studs —"

"Ball and chain," he added.

"Yes; that too. . . . Now I can't see any of those

THE ELDER MR. HARRISON 7

signs and attributes about you. And I've studied you for ten minutes."

"Then spread the glad news when you get back," he replied laughingly.

"I'll do it. I'll never believe another mean thing I read or hear about you, Mr. Harrison."

"Thanks," he said with a smile, bowing to her and moving away.

Harrison sought refuge in a corner occupied by Singleton E. Clyde, who rose to draw him to a chair. Mr. Clyde had come up from a ribbon clerk to be the proprietor of a half-block-wide department store. To the banks and investment men the Clyde Bazaar was known as a gold mine. He was thin and wizened. His sparse hair was turning gray, and it was written in his pallid cheeks that he had breathed the dry air of calico and gingham for twenty-five years.

"Nice evening," ventured Mr. Clyde. Harrison agreed. Although Mr. Clyde had casually met Harrison before, he was not accustomed to converse familiarly with political bosses. He was hopelessly rutted in shop. He had no views that could possibly interest the gentleman at his elbow. It struck him that his own success had been restricted after all. Mr. Clyde glanced furtively at Harrison. That distinguished personage was looking directly at him with consuming eyes.

"You — you met Mrs. Graydon — of course," Mr. Clyde remarked.

"Oh, yes."

"Fine looking woman, don't you think?"

"Yes." Harrison remembered that she was. He looked at her again — curiously — and now was forcibly convinced that Clyde spoke the truth. "Yes, she is. Who is she?"

"Mrs. Mulls met her last summer at Atlantic City. They stopped at the same hotel and became very chummy. You know how it is when you're away like that. The Mullses visited her in New York. She's thirty-two. She divorced her husband year before last. Her apartment faces Central Park."

Thus volubly did Mr. Clyde express himself and quite to Mr. Harrison's interest, it must be said.

Mrs. Clyde now joined her husband.

"So this is Mr. Harrison," she exclaimed, after her spouse had presented him. "Gracious! That's all I've heard lately — Mr. Harrison, Mr. Harrison. . . . You run the town, don't you?"

"Oh, no," he said modestly. Mr. Clyde, for his part, had his eye fixed nervously upon his helpmate.

"Yes, you do," she insisted. "I've heard of you, Mr. Harrison. Don't you fool me. Folks say you can help or hinder more than any man in Telford City. You don't look so *terrible*, though. I should

THE ELDER MR. HARRISON 9

like to have you come to our house some night for supper —”

“For dinner,” corrected Mr. Clyde.

“Yes, dinner. We’ve got a nice place out toward Edgcroft — fit for anybody.”

“I’d be glad to,” said Harrison.

“Some night next week, say —”

“Well —”

“Now don’t back out, Mr. Harrison.”

“I’ll let Mr. Clyde know in a day or so,” the boss replied with his choicest political smile. He moved away to a new group of admirers.

Mrs. Graydon joined the Clydes for a moment’s gossip.

“What do you think of *him*, Mrs. Graydon?” queried Mrs. Clyde.

“Mr. Harrison? I subscribe to the popular verdict — he’s splendid.”

“Widower for ten years,” declared Mrs. Clyde.

“Really. Any children?”

“A son — Jack Harrison. He’s a wild boy — twenty-five.”

“How old is — is *Mr.* Harrison?” inquired Mrs. Graydon sweetly.

“About fifty-four.”

“M-mm!” hummed Mrs. Graydon.

The guests of the evening had arrived. Telford City’s aristocracy of achievement was here in force,

10 THE MAN WHO WON

— men with strong, hard-set faces that bespoke their early struggles. Eager, money-making faces they had — faces capable of a vulpine flash in the midst of their pleasures. Edward Harrison knew this physiognomy of power. “With these fourteen men here to-night, I could turn Telford City inside out,” he said to himself, as he assayed them with his sharp measured glances. A few of the women had learned the trick of eyebrow stenciling, and many lips had been reddened by cosmetics. The New York fashions, as translated by Telford City dress-makers, prevailed. The hairdressing was in the mode. All in all, it was a gay crowd, sufficient unto itself, and secure in the thought of dollars stowed away against hard times, bodily ills and old age.

Somehow, Harrison had forgotten to take his dinner card that reposed in the hall. Mr. Mulls reminded him of his omission.

“Anyway,” whispered Mulls, “you’re to take in Mrs. Graydon.”

Harrison smiled vaguely. Some sly little family contriving, he figured. Yet he was content. Rather Mrs. Graydon than a tiresome old lady. Now he would see whether Mrs. Graydon was as interesting as she had given promise.

Dinner was announced. Harrison gave his arm to Mrs. Graydon and they proceeded to the lustrous

THE ELDER MR. HARRISON 11

dining-room scene,— china, silver and crystal spread dazzlingly upon the lace cover ; forced flowers bringing May in steam-heated January ; tall candlesticks imparting the dignity of Mullsian state ; shaded lights mellowing hand-painted wall-panels ; mirrors flashing the splendor tenfold ; and trellised vines and blossoms adorning the ceiling.

The company fell to talking, resuming the cliquy intimacy of the drawing-room. Harrison could not boast of being on close social terms with any of the diners. He chatted quietly with Mrs. Graydon, occasionally they listened discreetly to bits of conversation of the guests.

The vortex of the talk seemed to be one H. Storridge (the H. standing for the Biblical Hezekiah, which he wished masked). Yet Mr. Storridge could not conceal the fact that his life had been spent in a churchly atmosphere. Homely moral sayings abounded in his speech. Occasionally he would address some one as "brother" ; even "sister" came from his lips— incongruous terms in proximity with champagne and white shoulders. Storridge had been a day-worker ; now he was a manufacturing prince. He had been trained to be "good" (which meant anti-drinking, anti-cardplaying, anti-*everything* that inheres in the fleshly enjoyments of the unsaved) ; yet he wanted to be gay. The main difficulty he had experienced was that his old church

12 THE MAN WHO WON

connections and his new social connections were pulling at him from opposite directions. So Mr. Storridge had struck a compromise with his conscience, and had decided to give his free hours to his wine-drinking friends — but to remain chaste amid evil: no wine, no dancing, no cigars.

“The Social Purity Committee of the Anti-Vice League has asked me to be their spokesman before the mayor,” bubbled Mr. Storridge, causing a pause in the conversation at his end of the table. “I wanted to know what for, and they told me they were going to protest against the Hotel Lafayette holding dances in the main dining-room. I told the committee I’d have to speak to the missus first,” — here the missus blushed — “but they wouldn’t see it that way, so they dragged me down to the mayor’s office, and I gave it to Mr. Mayor straight from the shoulder.”

“Which dances?” inquired a James Morton, whose cynicism had the Storridge virtue as its chief butt.

“The so-called animal dances,” parroted Storridge after the set-phrase arguments of the Social Purity Committee.

“Why, those are the same dances this crowd has been doing all winter,” Mr. Morton pointed out. “You’ve been to three Assemblies and ought to

THE ELDER MR. HARRISON 18

know what we're dancing by this time. Haven't you seen the animals perform?"

"I don't dance, Mr. Morton. Not that I object, but I feel that —"

"We will now sing hymn on page twelve: 'I Hope to Meet You There.' Page twelve," mocked Mr. Morton. A general roar warned Mr. Storridge that his pet scruples were out of place to-night.

"Will there be dancing at the Hotel Lafayette?" Mrs. Graydon asked Harrison in a whisper. "You ought to know, Mr. Harrison, if you are what — what they say you are." Her eyes sparkled merrily.

Harrison smiled. "You bet there will be dancing at the Hotel Lafayette," he confided. He regarded Mrs. Graydon as a woman to whom a fact of state such as this might be safely entrusted. "I told the mayor not to interfere — and he won't. Something should be done to take the yawn out of the winter evenings here. Nothing happens in Telford City after dark except the moon," he said with a chuckle.

"Is it as bad as all that?" she asked.

"Well, it is a pretty dull city."

"Nevertheless, I think I'd like it."

"Oh, no — not after New York," he protested.

"Indeed, I think you have very good times here. This little party to-night is quite exhilarating. Do

14 THE MAN WHO WON

you dine frequently with your friends, Mr. Harrison?"

"No-o, this is about my first appearance." He did not wish Mrs. Graydon to consider his words as detractive, and he added: "These people are all right. They are the giants of affairs here. You understand, Mrs. Graydon?"

She understood perfectly. It was quite plain to see that he did not deal in dry goods and hardware and salable things, but in dramatic values — men's anger and cupidity and homage and admiration. Ruler he was and ruler he looked. Large-headed and full-faced, he had the mien of strength, of fighting qualities. His eyes were clear blue and were always calmly leveled, whatever transpired before him. Thus they were unreadable. His lips were set to a compression almost changeless. He was a man of few words. An audacious curling lock hung over his forehead. His neck was bull-like and his fists formidable.

Fifty-four! What years are those, Mrs. Graydon thought, to a man whose manner and appearance bespoke unquenchable youth?

The dinner was progressing finely. The appeal of food had been supplanted by the warming tug of the wine. Henry Mulls, with a proud eye over the whole scene, was detailing his adversities when, at

THE ELDER MR. HARRISON 15

the age of nineteen, he was earning two dollars a week and glad to get it. This was by way of contrasting his early misery with the present splendor — a very popular subject among the diners. Some one proposed that “we hear from our distinguished guest and fellow-townsmen, Mr. Harrison.” Harrison flushed and shook his head. Knife blades tinkled against glassware and crockery. Voices thundered that he must assent. Henry Mulls was on his feet urging him. Finally Harrison arose, vexed at being called upon to bear the brunt of such an ineptitude as this, but showing only his professional tranquil manner.

“I desire to say that I have enjoyed myself exceedingly to-night at this affair given in honor of a very charming young woman. I have been most fortunate to have been placed at her side, there to discover the graces of her mind and heart. I have been captivated.” He said this with a smile and bow, and to the accompaniment of a great din of approbation. Mrs. Graydon blushed, and then laughed heartily. Of course she attached no significance to this neatly turned compliment from the cleverest man in the room. To have done less would have been unworthy of him, she told herself. Yet his words forced themselves alluringly upon her thoughts. She could think of nothing else for several minutes.

16 THE MAN WHO WON

Having paid tribute to the guest of honor, Harrison must needs find something else to hold the attention of the aroused guests. He knew that they would not be content with courtly platitudes from him; they would expect something more.

"This is my first opportunity to meet many of you socially, but I have met the majority of the gentlemen in a business way, and I know your merits," he resumed. "When I ticked you off one by one earlier in the evening, I said to myself, 'These are the men who are making Telford City a hive of business and a place of achievement.' Yes, this is a business city and as long as I have any voice in the matter no man or body of men shall bait business or heckle business in Telford City." Even the women enthused; they began to comprehend that he, the presiding genius of the city, was in happy accord with the dollar-making ideals of their husbands. The incongruity of such a speech at such a time did not strike upon the sensibilities of the guests. All they cared about was that they were rubbing elbows with the exclusive Edward Harrison and that he was talking to them. The subject? Bosh! Any subject is suitable after three kinds of wine.

Harrison continued his remarks in his effective conversational tone. He was glad, he said, to be

THE ELDER MR. HARRISON 17

associated with such men. He knew of their struggles and their disappointments; they had risen above their fellows by the use of innate gifts. Their success was deserved. They were not born with silver spoons in their mouths like some men whom he could name.

"You have won by dint of what's in you, not by what was left you. You stand victors because you saw your way differently than the majority of men. You may be, perhaps, a little deficient in veneer, but why not? You are the rugged wood of which foundations are made — not the shiny spindle-legged pieces for the front parlor. When I want to put a *proposition* through, I don't go to the blooded stock of Laurel Avenue. I come to you and to such as you, and I achieve results. Gentlemen, when I figure on the real 'Who's Who' in Telford City, I need not go beyond this table."

Harrison sat down. The guests applauded mightily. His praise had been bounteous, acceptable. Grateful eyes rested on him. Harrison checked off the incident as not a bad stroke. If he had been a little fulsome in praise, it had been with a nice calculation for effect. A sly fellow behind his straight-shot glances and fair words, was he.

When Mrs. Mulls rose, as a signal for the other women, her joy was immeasurable for having provided "entertainment" in the person of this "card"

18 THE MAN WHO WON

of an Edward Harrison. Who else, pray, had had him at their table? Where had he spoken on such intimate terms. And who were the really consequential men of the city? Her husband and his friends. Was there ever such an evening, such a triumph!

"I sha'n't see you later in the drawing-room, Mrs. Graydon. I must be going directly," he said later in the evening. Then, after a pause. "May I take you to the Country Club for luncheon to-morrow."

"I'll — I'll be very glad to go," she faltered, the pink tell-tale of surprise on her cheek.

"I'll call for you at one."

"Thank you. I've had a delightful time to-night, Mr. Harrison."

"Thank you." He nodded smilingly as they shook hands.

A minute later he was getting into his fur coat in the hallway with Henry Mulls buzzing at his elbow.

"Harrison, you've been a delight. Everybody says so."

"I've enjoyed myself hugely, Henry. I don't go in for these things as a rule."

"But you should. I noticed that Mrs. Graydon made you come out of your shell."

"She certainly did."



THE ELDER MR. HARRISON 19

“She’s a wonder,” said Henry Mulls. “You ought to know her better.”

“Very superior woman,” commented Harrison.

He slowly descended the front steps, pulling thoughtfully at a cigar. He didn’t appear to notice that Henry Mulls was at his side giving him gracious escort to the waiting motor.

CHAPTER II

THE YOUNGER MR. HARRISON

THE door of the outer office of Samuel Winthrop's law suite was pulled hastily open, and a young man burst into the room. He was a lean-faced, angular young man, nervously brisk and springy in his movements. His cheeks were aglow with the cold, snappy tingle of dry winter. The impression of a quick glance was one of thin legs, a narrow waist line within a tight overcoat, passable shoulders, wide walking shoes and a sporty soft hat. His stiff blond hair ended in crinkly little wisps. His skin was of olive tint, setting off in a pleasing contrast blue eyes of unusual brilliance.

"Good morning, Mr. Harrison," chirped Miss Mary Treep, who presided at Mr. Winthrop's typewriter. Mary was all eyes and blushes whenever Mr. Harrison was present. Such masculine perfection she had never beheld prior to his advent into the Winthrop office as a student of law.

"Goo' mornin', Mr. Harrison," said Aloysius Murphy, knickerbockered office boy, bowing and

YOUNGER MR. HARRISON 21

stopping momentarily the mastication of a generous supply of chewing gum.

"Good morning, children," airily replied Jack Harrison, divesting himself of overcoat and gloves and blowing upon two cold fists. "Anything broken loose?"

"Judge Corson brought these papers in for you to sign," said Aloysius, handing him the documents.

"The Willis Estate Appraisement matter — I'll attend to it later. . . . Heavens, it's ten-thirty!"

"Are you goin' to take the bar exams *this* February?" asked Aloysius. The boy winked at the stenographer.

"I told you once before that it was none of your business when I'm going to take the examinations," snapped young Harrison.

"Yes, sir."

Miss Treep trembled. Her heart sank whenever Mr. Harrison raised his voice. She couldn't understand why anybody should ruffle him. That horrid Murphy boy often riled him about the bar examinations when, as a matter of fact, Mr. Harrison just detested that subject being brought up. People ought not to rile Mr. Harrison! He was so quick-tempered and forgiving and generous and —. She looked daggers at Aloysius Murphy. What business was it of any one when Mr. Harrison passed the examinations? Suppose he failed, what harm?

Some day he'd settle down and marry and have pretty children looking like his handsome self. The domestic note was uppermost in Mary's scheme of paradise.

"I swep' out your office this mornin', Mr. Harrison," ventured Aloysius. Aloysius, it seemed, was the recipient of a weekly fee from Jack, in addition to receiving sundry cast-off, though little-worn, garments. Hence Aloysius was for peace measures.

"All right, Aloysius."

Harrison smiled. Mary brightened over her page of typewriting. Aloysius began to whistle through his front teeth as he set to work polishing the office furniture. Jack Harrison had released sunshine once again in Samuel Winthrop's office.

The adjoining room was Harrison's private office. He entered and looked about the room. There was a rug, a desk, two chairs, a telephone and a small book rack. Otherwise the room was bare. To Harrison it was a prison cell. Its four walls held captive his high hopes and ambitions. He wanted to go in for newspaper work but his father emphatically ruled otherwise. Edward Harrison frowned upon that profession. All the reporters he knew were ill-paid. They were a happy, care-free, highstrung, honest set, the elder Harrison admitted, but they kept bad company, drank hard,

YOUNGER MR. HARRISON 23

rolled cigarettes and were inveterate borrowers. As for editors — they were men who had graduated with all the habits and proclivities of reporters. The editors who were against them politically might hammer away at him for all he cared; the editors who were for him politically — they would black his shoes for him if he willed it. No, the writing profession was impossible for a Harrison. To be the best editor in the United States was, to Edward Harrison's mind, an honor not equal to being leader of the First Precinct of the Eighth Ward. Writers, with their night hours, iconoclastic typewriters, and poverty — he pitied and despised them.

"But men who write well may eventually contribute to magazines, and write books," Jack suggested.

"What do you want to write for?" his father asked.

If Jack had expressed an ambition to sell stoves or hosiery, his father would have understood, but to think that a son of his was filled with a passion to scribble when he, Edward Harrison, had never seen a scribbler who was imposing or admirable or magnificent — the idea was preposterous!

The elder Harrison then desired to know what was his son's next high ambition. Jack hadn't any. Therefore, the father suggested the law, and to law

Jack permitted himself to be dragged. It was now more than four years since he had registered in the office of Samuel Winthrop. Some people were beginning to count years and declare that it was nearly time that Jack Harrison was becoming a lawyer. Jack was a thin-skinned youth, and the blood came to his face when this dread subject was raised. He had not read sufficient law to pass. He had wasted oceans of time. Now he was in a quandary whether to quit his law books and take up another line or buckle down to study and have the agony over with.

The first thing Jack did when he entered his office was to pick up Blackstone's Commentaries which lay provokingly at hand. He had been skimming over this volume the past few days to ascertain how much of its dry contents he had retained. Very little, he feared.

Jack began to read — dreamily and with knitted brow. He drowsed over a chapter or two and then laid down the book. His memory had retained no clear-cut notion of principles. With a sigh he laid hold of Greenleaf on Evidence — another time-worn guiding post on the long way. He opened it at random. In ten minutes' time he cast the volume aside. He toyed with some penholders; he stuffed a few elastic bands in his pocket; he glanced through

YOUNGER MR. HARRISON 25

two or three desk drawers, aimlessly overturning their contents — then he rose and put on his hat and coat.

“I’m going out to buy some cigarettes,” he announced to Aloysius Murphy.

“I’ll get ’em for you, Mr. Harrison.”

“No, thanks. I want a bit of fresh air, anyway.”

“Did you sign Judge Corson’s papers?” inquired Aloysius.

“No, but I’ll attend to them when I come back. I sha’n’t be long.”

It was a few minutes after eleven when Jack reached the street. For a while he stood before the doorway of the office building. The air braced him; the pleasant sun caressed him soothingly. He was happy. He was bowing and tipping to the right and the left in response to the broad smiles lavished upon him — Edward Harrison’s son — Telford City’s crown prince.

City officeholders, who knew where their bread was buttered, wrung his hand in passing. Gray-haired lawyers, who had mastered Blackstone and Greenleaf a thousand times over, edged toward him the better to draw his morning salute. Miss Matilda Mulls, who espied him from a stationer’s window, was bearing his way, but before she could reach him, two cronies had swept him away in their affectionate grasp.

"No, I've got to go back to the office," Jack declared, trying to pull away.

"Shucks, the morning is nearly over," responded Charlie Clyde, son of Singleton E. Clyde, the dry goods king. Charlie Clyde was vice-president of his father's company, the duties of which august office permitted of his loafing at almost any hour of the day. He really had been at his desk since nine o'clock on this particular morning. He had, however, taken to the street about ten-thirty on the plea of a severe headache. His father had said: "Yes, Charlie, stay in the fresh air the rest of the morning, and 'phone me if you don't feel well enough to come back to the store after lunch. I'll attend to your mail." So dried-up old Singleton E. Clyde, who had been enfeebled by years of office work, motioned his pink-cheeked heir toward the door.

Down-street Charlie had picked up Wilgus Hammond, and together they swooped down upon Jack Harrison.

Unresisting, Jack was piloted within the portals of the Washington Club, where he held membership with a hundred other young exclusives. A dozen dandies were grouped in the wide windows watching the street pageant. "Hello, Jack," they chorused as he waved to them. This shouting seemed to be highly disturbing to three or four young men who were sprawled on elephantine black

YOUNGER MR. HARRISON 27

leather chairs taking a mid-day nap to repay nature for the roistering hours of early morning. These young gentlemen had awakened, bewildered and snorting, and then smiled in rather sickly fashion when they beheld Jack Harrison.

"You fellows look done up after last night," commented Jack.

"Well — how do *you* feel?" asked Jason Storridge, son of the psalm-singing Hezekiah Storridge. Jason's face was bluish and drawn this morning.

"I have felt better," admitted Harrison. "When? Why, at two o'clock this morning."

The chair invalids tittered. Charlie Clyde and Hammond took Jack in charge and hustled him to the grill-room.

"What are you having?" asked Clyde. "I told my father I had a headache. I must do something for it."

"Martini," said Hammond.

"I'm not taking anything," said Jack. "I've just had breakfast."

"What difference does that make? You're not a dietician, are you?" inquired Clyde.

"M-mm! I'll take what you take," replied Jack.

"Three Martinis," ordered Clyde.

The bustle of luncheon time was beginning to set in. Came young lawyers with briefless court satchels, young doctors, who had office hours instead of

patients, and pampered young sons, who appeared as if they hadn't accomplished anything at their desks the whole forenoon. Then there were gingery business chaps who sat down for a bite and no more — ten-minute fellows who had no time for club nonsense.

The club fellows, when they paid any interest in anything beside the food, looked at Jack Harrison. That he smiled often, drained his glass quite frequently, laughed boyishly and seemed unconscious of the attention he was attracting — these were traits eminently satisfying to friendly gazers. "Jack Harrison likes his little drink all right. He's a good fellow," was the verdict.

Rye highs succeeded cocktails at Jack's table. The board was jammed with siphons, decanters and ice dishes, without the sign of an edible. Jason Storridge left his chair of sleep and joined the party. He had just overcome the dizzying effect of his first cigarette of the day, and was now attuned to the whims of the thirsty trio he had joined.

"Say, Jason, you're beginning to look human again," observed Jack.

"Oh, boy, what I went through!" Jason grasped his forehead.

"We ought to stop it — on the level," Clyde protested. "We'll all be seeing lizards on the wall-paper next."

YOUNGER MR. HARRISON 29

"Now don't talk that way," said Jack. "If you fellows quit, I'll have the trouble and expense of breaking in a new crew. Consider my feelings, sirs."

"Curse you, Jack Harrison! You never broke me in," thundered Clyde.

"If I didn't break you in, I at least hardened you," replied Jack. "You were a shameless milk-punch drinker before you went to school with me. I taught you to refuse green drinks at the end of banquets."

"Ye have been a good friend to me, Jack Harrison; that ye have."

"I well remember my first beer," began Jack. "It was a dark night. A low mist overhung the front door of Mahaffey's saloon in the old Second Ward. I was a mere lad of sixteen, but I passed for twenty-one — Mahaffey needed my nickel. I had been to tea at a maiden aunt's when —"

"Cut it, Jack; the bar here closes in a scant twelve hours. Order something," admonished Clyde.

"The same. But it's the last. I've got to get back to the office and sign some papers Judge Corson left for me."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Clyde. "I'll get my car and we'll go to the Country Club for

lunch. Then I'll bring you into town directly afterwards."

"Why go to the Country Club?" asked Jack.
"Why not lunch here?"

"We've *been* here," explained Clyde.

"Oh, I see," Jack said.

The trip was arranged despite Jack's protest. However, he decided to go rather than "break up a good party." Clyde's car was brought around, and they soon whisked countryward. Jason Storridge began to sing when they reached the country roads. He hadn't been to his desk in the Storridge works for more than two weeks, and he served notice that if the present weakness of his nerves continued, he'd lay off until summer.

"I tell you, boys, I've got to stay on this rip until I have it over with," he said. "That's my disposition — you know what I mean — heedless-like. It's a shame — the way I've been treating my girl. You know her — Muriel Clayton. She called me up twice at the club this morning. But she can't do anything with me when I get like this. Nobody can. I haven't been over to her house for an age. No reason why I shouldn't. Only I like to devil her. She's heartbroken, boys. Too good for me — she is — by God!"

"Shut up, you idiot!" shouted Jack from the front seat.

YOUNGER MR. HARRISON 31

Storridge took off his hat to allow the wind to strike upon his enfevered head. He ran his gloved fingers through his hair.

"I'm going to get off this tear a week from to-day," he announced. But his words were lost in the rushing wind.

The Country Club stood on the brow of a commanding hill. The main building was originally a stone farmhouse to which had been linked a half-dozen additions in varied architecture, all encircled by a huge piazza. The golf-links was dead-gray. The flower beds were under straw. The horse-trough was frozen. Storm doors rattled in the biting wind that swept from the north.

"Order four stoves at the bar right off," advised Clyde as he was putting his car away in the shed.

Hammond carried out this direction while the others sought a table in the rathskeller. A huge log crackled in the fireplace. A couple of brass-bound casks containing sherry and port reposed on wooden horses in a corner. At the head of the stairs a gargoye grinned.

Clyde came in just in time for the hot toddies. Clyde ordered terrapin, roast duck, apple pie, and coffee for the four.

"I'm going to make a day of it," said Storridge, joyfully looking at his glass.

"How long have you been missing from home?" asked Jack.

"I haven't slept under father's roof for a week. Father and I haven't been hitting it off any too well. He won't listen to any of my views on the business. I own one-third the stock, too — think of that. So I made up my mind if he don't have me in business, he sha'n't have me at home. But he'll knuckle down. He always does. He'll be calling for me at the club, see if he doesn't."

"With an ambulance!" suggested Jack Harrison.

It was three o'clock. The meal was over. Its high-pitched gayety had long since subsided. A great muster of empty bottles stood in the center of the table. Storridge sat dim-eyed, remorseful. Jack felt heavy and sullen. A post-prandial stupor had fallen upon the whole company — too much duck and alcohol.

Jack held out his glass to the waiter for replenishment. "Come on, you fellows," he called. "Drink up — or shall we serve tea." He nodded to the waiter for a fresh quart.

"Jack, have mercy," besought Charlie Clyde.

"You brought me here — my day is gone. So we'll drink."

Before the wine came Harrison was called to the

YOUNGER MR. HARRISON 33

telephone. Aloysius Murphy was at the other end of the wire.

"They told me at the Washin'ton Club where you was at, Mr. Harrison. Why — Judge Corson has been here twice about them papers since you left."

"All right," said Jack.

"He said they ought to be signed to-day."

"I sha'n't be back to-day."

"I say, Mr. Harrison, it was Judge Corson himself."

"Is that so? Well, Judge Corson wants to be named judge again next year. You didn't know that, eh? . . . Good-by, Aloysius."

"Your father is in the dining-room, Harrison," said Jason Storridge, who was just returning from bedeviling Muriel Clayton by telephone. "Honest, Jack, he's got some swell looker in tow. He's a sly dog, the guv'nor."

"Quit, Storridge," commanded Jack.

"But he is sly — I say, Jack, don't get mad." Storridge had suddenly altered his tone when he noted the change that had come over Harrison's face — a bad weather warning. Storridge took a seat in all meekness.

"I'm going, boys," said Jack.

84 THE MAN WHO WON

"What for? Because of this shrimp?" inquired Clyde, pointing to Storridge.

"Oh, no. You see, I'm supposed to be studying law."

But Edward Harrison espied his hopeful in the hallway. So Jack must needs respond to his father's beckoning, leaving his companions to wait in the automobile shed. It was well he had left them behind for they were a clattering, rowdy lot by this time. Jack's face was slightly flushed.

"My son — Mrs. Graydon."

They shook hands cordially. Jack wondered who she was. He never remembered having seen her before. What was she doing with his father? She was a bewitching creature, at any rate, Jack thought. Lustrous, dark eyes, warm, gypsy-like coloring, a roguish, alert brightness of glance — these attributes impressed him immediately. She was attired in a New York creation of the hour that was a little bewildering to Telford City eyes.

"We'll take you back in the motor with us," said Edward Harrison to his son.

"The boys are waiting to take me back."

"Bother the boys. Go back with us."

Jack went out to notify his associates of the change in plans. On the way he ruminated over his father's graciousness in the face of his own wasted

YOUNGER MR. HARRISON 35

day. His ears should have tingled pleasantly from the panegyric tattle in the dining room.

"Jack's a kid, Mrs. Graydon," Edward Harrison was saying. "He hasn't found himself as yet. I'm pretending I'm not watching him grow. He thinks that I think he's an angel. He's a scamp. I hear all about him. He's the best kind of a bad boy a man would want for a son — and admit it."

"So that's Mr. Jack, eh?" said Mrs. Graydon.

Harrison did not answer. He was thinking of a little Jack, a toddler, and of the mother who brought him down to the office afternoons when Edward Harrison was known as a hustling coal salesman and nothing more.

"We'll start now, Mrs. Graydon," the elder Harrison said softly. His son held the front door open for them to pass. They entered the big Harrison car.

"Drop me at the office, father," said the young Harrison. "I want to get some papers that I must deliver to Judge Corson to-day."

CHAPTER III

A TEST FOR HIS SOUL

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY had been the *usual* holiday. A few flags cracked like whiplashes in the winter's gale; a few men idled because the doors of banks and city buildings were closed by patriotic decree. The Washington Club mounted its punch bowl in the east parlor and hauled down the front blinds. Out Laurel Avenue way the War Daughters were resurrecting their shadowy ancestors for the annual display of pedigrees. The afternoon papers carried a "cut" of George Washington and the announcement that "the day is being quietly observed," which was the most truthful bit of news in type.

Mrs. Charlie Clyde was entertaining friends in the evening at her home. In pursuance of a promise made to Charlie Clyde that he would "bring somebody," Jack Harrison was setting forth at 8:30 o'clock in the Harrison motor in the direction of the dwelling of Miss Eva Wilcox on Hilldale Avenue. Eva was not the prettiest girl in the world, nor the

wisest, but a young man might summon Eva to three dances in a row and not consider himself or be considered engaged. There was Doris Edwards — Jack had taken her to the Fourth Assembly two weeks before, yet he would not for his very life have asked her to the Clyde affair. Doris was likeable, but her conversation was too personal for such an avowed free lance as Mr. Harrison, the younger. While he would miss Doris' smile and superb dancing to-night, he would feel more free with the less brilliant Eva Wilcox.

"Now, Eva, what have you been doing?" Jack asked, as they settled down in the motor.

"Not a thing. This is my first time out in two weeks. Nobody wants a big girl. Ha! All right, John Harrison, you shall be rewarded for this. Remember — 'the greatest of these is charity.' No, no, I don't really mean it. I've not been forsaken. Mr. Hays of East Telford took me to the theater last Wednesday. Then we went to the Hotel Lafayette and danced. You've been? And I forgot: Didn't I go to a house dance Friday evening with Wilgus Hammond? Oh, I'm getting around for a stout lady who trips the light fantastic — accent on the 'trips.' And to-night! My, I'm glad to see you, John Harrison."

"Wilgus —" began Jack teasingly.

"Tush, tush! Nice young man — Wilgus —

outside of club hours," she retorted. "No, Jack, your hopes are groundless. Wilgus is merely a friend. No — he — they — they're all friends. If I were a wee tiny thing, no doubt they'd come forward and offer protection and other kindnesses, but when they size me up — humph! no silly nonsense with such a hulk of a girl. So, you see, I'm as free as —"

"Jack Harrison," he added quickly.

"Have it your way. But why should you be free at your age, with your prospects?"

"My prospects?" he repeated dolefully. "Why, Eva, I haven't any prospects."

"You haven't? Heavens and earth, Jack!"

"No, I'm a misfit . . . but we won't talk about it."

To hear Jack Harrison, with his good looks, popularity, position, and money — the son of the town's first citizen — bemoaning his prospects — all this was scarcely believable.

"Here we are now," said Jack as the automobile came to stop in front of Charlie Clyde's stuccoed home.

They alighted and picked their way over the curving gravel path.

"Do you know, Jack — it doesn't seem as if we were going to a party at all," she murmured sadly.

"That's the way I feel to-night, too," he an-

swered. "I'd rather be talking to you at home than going in here."

"Let's go back, John —"

The front door opened and Charlie Clyde welcomed them.

Everybody was there; that is, everybody worth while of the younger set. Of course none of the few dozen top-crust families were present, not having been invited for the reason that they would not have come. The freezing and the frozen Hillarys and Maples and Sedleys might deign to speak to the Clydes and the Mullses at the annual Charity Ball, and might even exchange commonplaces at the Country Club tennis tournament in June, but to hobnob with these manufacturers and manufacturers' sons — sordid moneygetters of the present generation — that was asking too much of the aristocracy of Laurel Avenue. Charlie Clyde must needs be content, and was content, with the company of wealth in its newness. Hence, the presence of the McClintocks, the Pages, the Jack Harrisons, the dozen and one other persons who stood for everything notable in Telford City life except imposing genealogy. Here were "Real Estate" and "Banking" and "Trolley Franchises" dancing with the daughters of "Dry Goods" and "Plumbing Incorporated" and "Wholesale Drugs."

Jack Harrison was gloomy. He had no humor for the bright things of the evening. A dance of duty with Eva Wilcox over, he slipped into an inconspicuous side room. For a few minutes he beguiled himself with a book; then this cozy precinct was invaded by a couple seeking privacy, Jason Storridge and Muriel Clayton. Storridge was convalescent from his late alcoholic siege.

"Don't go, Harrison," said Storridge. "Muriel and you have never met, you know. Mr. Harrison — Miss Clayton."

Muriel Clayton was "recent." She had been inflated with importance ever since the attentions of Jason Storridge had transplanted her into a circle of mortals surpassing in wealth "the bunch" with whom she had formerly associated. "The bunch" comprised a neighborhood clique of small-salaried young men who were mating with young women who had been taught to hope for better. Muriel's father was a builder of houses by the row, and rotated between bankruptcy and affluence every hour of the twenty-four. To strike a balance of bricks, mortar, and beams as against rents, leases, and sales, he had found impossible. He had continued to build feverishly and to cast no totals. The appearance of Jason Storridge on the family horizon had been an heartening omen. Muriel had been weaned away from "the bunch" with their rounds of card nights,

and had been drilled in circumspection by her mother. Her outfit was procured in New York at an appalling pull upon bricks and mortar. The result, however, justified the outlay. Muriel had become one of the most attractive girls in Telford City. Jason Storridge had but to behold her modish magnificence to stand convinced that he had chosen wisely.

"I've heard of you so often, Mr. Harrison," Muriel began. "Lionel Carter used to speak of you."

"Lionel Carter?"

"Yes. *He* called before Mr. Storridge did, you know. He's been making himself perfectly ridiculous ever since."

"Keeps writing letters and spying," chimed in Storridge. "He'll go a little too far some day; then — watch out."

"Mercy!" ejaculated Muriel.

"I'll let you take the case — when you're admitted," remarked Storridge with a wink. Jack Harrison felt the familiar old twinge. "By the way," Storridge resumed, "are you going up for examinations to-morrow?"

"No," barked Jack savagely.

"Well, Silvers is going up. He says it will be a cinch."

Jack withdrew with a sickening heart. The

42 THE MAN WHO WON

guests were enjoying the banjo-thrummed one-step which was then at its newest in Telford City. They were padding along with even grace and time — smiling, happy. Away they pegged — stepping, stepping, stepping — arms raised rigidly, every foot scraping the floor with military precision to the drum-tap. . . . The rhythmic mass swirled alluringly before him. His toes were tingling with the dance tune.

“Come, Doris, let us try this dance.” He spoke to a handsome girl who was in the company of two very devoted young men.

“Certainly, Jack.”

“Where have you been all evening?” he asked.

“Jack Harrison! . . . As if you cared. . . . Deserting me for these past few weeks . . . ever since the Fourth Assembly. . . . Don’t like me any more, Jack?” She laughed, but her tone was plaintively questioning.

“I do, Doris.”

“Well, why don’t you come out to see me? . . . Must I wait for another chance meeting like this? . . . To be picked up and set down for another term of weeks? . . . Well . . . just the same, nobody else has been to see me since you called last. . . . I sha’n’t ask any one else. . . . Now!”

Poor, pretty Doris Edwards! If she would only

A TEST FOR HIS SOUL 43

be impersonal like big Eva Wilcox, Jack Harrison would enjoy calling. But this pursuing, outspoken adoration alarmed him. He fought shy of a friendship, having passed through two or three in his earlier days — futile attachments with stacks of silly letters to be returned, and haunting memories.

"Doris, you know I'm on the go all the time," he explained.

"You couldn't spare me one teeny, weeny evening once in a while, could you?"

"Oh, yes — surely."

"Well, then —"

"Next Monday evening," he said. He resolved, however, that Doris Edwards would only see him once a month.

At one A. M. Eva Wilcox was shaking hands with Jack Harrison, and thanking him for her delightful evening. He forthwith engaged himself to take her to another dance the very next night. Such was her reward for being sensible and unromantic in matters relating to Jack Harrison's heart. He shook her hand with a notable degree of masculinity (allowable in the case of Eva's heavy hand), and bounded down-steps to his car. Ten minutes later he was before his own door.

Strangely, all the hall lights were burning brightly as he entered.

44 THE MAN WHO WON

"I wonder—" he was saying to himself.

His father opened the library door and called him. Jack noticed that the library lights were ablaze too. Several cigar stumps in an ash tray indicated that his father had put in a long vigil.

"Jack, you're not ready to take the exams to-day — of course."

"No," replied Jack.

"So I thought."

There was no heat in the elder Harrison's manner as was customary with him when discussing this subject. Jack was puzzled. He watched his father carefully, but the latter's face betrayed nothing. Then Jack happened to glance at the desk top before him. A printed sheet of paper was lying there. His eyes moved over the first paragraph:

1. *Distinguish between recoupment and offset, and state whether the defendant can have judgment on either.*

At the top of the paper were the significant words: STATE BAR EXAMINATIONS,—and underneath: ATTORNEY'S QUESTIONS. *The examination questions!*

"Now, Jack," said his father in deliberate accents, "you get to work on this at once. After you change your clothes, go downtown, open your office, and look up these questions in the law books.

A TEST FOR HIS SOUL 45

Start right off. You must finish by eight o'clock and give me back this sheet unfolded. I must have it in the hands of one of the bar examiners before he opens the examinations in the morning. What do you care about the loss of sleep?"

"Count me out on that, father."

"What?"

"I don't want any of the game."

"You mean to say —"

"I'm quitting the law."

"When?"

"To-night."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know."

"H-mm! You're a queer one. I don't think I quite understand you. . . ." The father's voice was low, his words rather mumbled. Admittedly he was chagrined and disappointed by the refusal. "Anyhow — come down to the office to-morrow and I'll try to find something for you to do. Good-night."

Edward Harrison sat for an hour glancing aimlessly at the examination questions, and wondering whether his son Jack Harrison had been deterred from using them by cowardice — or conscience.

CHAPTER IV

CONGENIAL EMPLOYMENT

JACK HARRISON inhaled a new-found freedom as he walked downtown the next morning to see what his father had for him in the way of a position. The old humbug and bugaboo of the law was buried forever. The months of February and June, with their recurring bar examinations, would not weigh heavy on him hereafter. Blackstone could go hang, and so might the whole pestiferous crew of text writers! Law was not to be his line, thank Heaven! The volumes of calf, the somnolent briefs, the speeches of law chambers and court lobbies, the dryness and the tediousness of the profession — all had been dropped from his life.

His happiness swelled the mightier that he had said *No*. He felt no revulsion against his father. The city boss had commandeered a sheet of paper to give his laggard son a career. He had over-ridden the law to do it. But why need such things harry him? Edward Harrison, with all his frailties, was what Telford City wanted or he wouldn't be where he was. Moralists never became city rulers.

CONGENIAL EMPLOYMENT 47

Cities wanted full-blooded, bold ambitious men as potentates — and such men *would* very likely obtain examination papers illegally for their sons. At any rate, he, Jack Harrison, hadn't used the questions, and there had been no harm done.

Edward Harrison's office was undergoing onslaught when Jack arrived. It was the hour of the *levee*, and the two ante-rooms were filled with suppliants for the intercession of the royal hand. Here were timorous men holding bedraggled caps, and brisk men drumming on derbies — waiting patiently for their turn to be ushered into the imperial presence. From ten until eleven each day the woes and the wants of Telford City were laid upon the carved oak desk in the inner sanctum, to be alleviated — or not — as Edward Harrison thought best.

Jim Fulton, who tended door for the senior Mr. Harrison (besides looking after the political welfare of the inhabitants of the Fifth Precinct of the Seventeenth Ward), jerked his close-cropped head at Jack and pushed open the door.

"It's aw right. G'wan in," said Fulton, in a bull bellow, with which words he strove to convey the meaning that, occupying Edward Harrison's attention at that time was Luke Meldridge, a party groveler. Fulton showed Luke the door; Luke responded with an obsequious bow. Fulton's disciplinary hand acted as magic wand in "the or-

ganization." It was a bruising hand, too, on occasion, Fulton being known as "Harrison's gorilla," which signified bodyguard and office bouncer. In his ward-heeling days Harrison had done his own pummeling, but now he desired to spare his knuckles and cravats. It was a treat for him to see Fulton in action. Jim Fulton preserved "order" at political gatherings even if he employed assault and battery to accomplish it. Harrison would rather watch Fulton heave bodies through a convention doorway than listen to the most dulcet speech from Colonel Redway, the premier spellbinder of the organization.

"You're a little late. Sit down here," said Edward Harrison to his son as he scratched a memorandum on a pad. It was Harrison's custom to give but a word or two of writing to his callers, big or little. With the exception of his own signature, which flowed smooth and ornamental from his pen, he was a labored writer. Spelling bothered him, too—he invariably wrote "friends" and "hoping." He was abashed at the fruits of his fountain pen. It was his only performance that mocked him.

"Let's get down to business, Jack," resumed the father, applying a blotter to the ink with a great banging of the desk top. "I was thinking of making you my personal secretary—keeping tabs on

CONGENIAL EMPLOYMENT 49

all these callers — the writing part, you know. I'm not much on slinging a pen. This is all stuff that should be tabulated, maybe card-indexed. For instance, you put down the caller's name, what he wants, and what I say he is to get. See? Then there are a million and one ways you can be handy to me. Will you take it?"

"Certainly."

"And remember — whenever you feel you are too honest to do a piece of work, let me know and I'll take it off your hands."

Jack recognized this as a gentle slap. He made no reply. He brought a chair to the desk and took up a clean white tablet. His father pressed a button beneath the desk, and Jim Fulton ushered in another caller.

"Hello, Tom," Edward Harrison saluted the newcomer. Tom answered with considerable embarrassment, and rocked on his legs until the boss motioned him to a chair. "Well, Tom, what can I do for you?"

"You remember my daughter —"

"Anna?"

"She's a teacher now."

"Fine."

"She's teaching primary at present. I'd like to get her transferred to the grammar grades. More money in it."

50 THE MAN WHO WON

"Who does this come under, Tom?"

"The Teachers' Committee of the Board of Education."

"I'll attend to it. Good-by, Tom."

As the door closed Harrison turned to his son with this direction: "See Bob Erwin of the Teachers' Committee for Tom Gorts, Chapel Street."

"Don't you want me to put down his daughter's name, and what position she's after?" asked Jack.

"No, I'll remember that."

The desk button buzzed again beneath Edward Harrison's finger, and soon a large-bodied individual made his appearance in the doorway.

"Come in, Monahan," called Edward Harrison cheerily. "Traffic cop," he said to Jack, *sotto voce*.

Monahan approached with ponderous swing, his mammoth, square-toed shoes creaking annoyingly. He wore his blue service trousers with the gray coat and vest of civilian ease. A celluloid collar worried his overlapping neck folds. He was plainly ill at ease. Monahan would have preferred riot duty to this.

"Mr. Harrison, I'm tired of bein' plain patrolman. I want to be roundsman, if you don't mind, sir. Tim Callahan jined the force the same time I did, and looka him now. Then looka me. I want roundsman."

CONGENIAL EMPLOYMENT 51

"Have you studied up for it?"

"No, sir, but I've saved up for it."

"Get out, Monahan, *get* out!"

Monahan shuffled heavily to the door, giving Jim Fulton a military salute in passing.

"You got done quick," said Fulton.

"Jim, when it comes to talkin' for meself — I'm a hit. Phew! The big feller is bad to-day — bad!"

"Say, Jack," remarked Mr. Harrison senior, "what would we do with Monahan's fifty-four dollars and seventy-eight cents?"

"Say, dad, do you know — this job suits me."

.

Within an hour the ante-rooms were cleared of applicants and Jack Harrison had accumulated four sheets of personal data ready to be summarized for the card index. Jack's notes were photographic, playful, and glinted with the hopeful luminance of an authorship that would not down. In this wise he had sketched some of his father's visitors:

"James C. Whitely. Banker. Dean Street Building. High hat and spats do much for his respectability. A smiling man — too smiling. Wants father to persuade two of the bank directors to vote him a big loan for a building scheme. Father says he'll do what he can, which means that he won't. Mr. Whitely's pearl reindeer gloves and

high voice very impressive — but not enough for father. A reliable man, too! Not a mark against him, but he has the *look*: Canada first stop."

"Abe Cohen. Hosiery. 612 Broad Street. Orthodoxically bearded. Solemn. His daughter is to be married. Delivered wedding invitation in person. 'Will Mr. Harrison please kindly come?' Father will. I guess it's votes. March 18th. Amphion Hall. 8 o'clock. Full dress. Gift."

"John Geiger. Detached from employment at present. Owes rent at 154 Edmonds Street. But has ideas — good ones. Has patented an automobile tire that can't possibly be punctured. Talk of all the cigar stores. He wants to borrow an even \$6,000 from father to place it on the market. Father gave him five dollars, which seemed to please him just as well. Left grinning. Father says: 'See, I've won his everlasting friendship and saved \$5,995.'"

"Rev. Dr. Sedley Elliott Wicker. Pastor Napier Avenue Church. Has been doing morning shopping in a silk topper. Loaf of bread and can of sardines are suggested in discreet bundle. Opposes re-granting of license Otto Raupt, saloonkeeper. Says Raupt's electric piano clashes with the church organ on prayer-meeting nights. Father said: 'Why, I'm not the licensing board, Dr. Wicker.' — 'But I understood —' began Dr. Wicker. 'No, in-

CONGENIAL EMPLOYMENT 58

deed,' said father, 'but you might try the police.'"

"Otto Raupt. Napier avenue saloon. Seeks license renewal. Short interview. Father said: 'Otto, you've got to cut out that electric piano on church nights or lose your license. Hear me?'—Otto said: 'Gott!'"

"Edgar Sleath. 213 Parkway Avenue. Son arrested for burglarizing a store. 'The Grand Jury is sitting and I thought—' said Mr. Sleath.—'Good Heavens, you don't expect me to tamper with the Grand Jury? The law won't permit it,' said father.—'It will kill the boy's mother,' said Mr. Sleath.—Then father said: 'Come in again Saturday and I may have something to tell you. Good-by, Mr. Sleath. Jack get Stover to come here this afternoon.'—'Which Stover?' I asked.—Father replied: 'J. Edwin Stover, foreman of the Grand Jury.' . . . I am seeing as I never saw before."

A lone straggler walked into one of the waiting rooms when Jim Fulton was about to depart for his mid-day beer and frankfurters. Jim scowled.

"What do you—what kin I do fer you?" asked Jim sourly. Jim felt that he was technically off duty when his hat was on his head.

"Tell Mr. Harrison that Mr. Woods is here," said the stranger.

Mr. Woods appeared blue-frozen hunched within

his shabby brown overcoat. Unkempt hair tufts fell over the turned-up collar. His eyes were weary, heavy-lidded eyes that looked as though they had not known sleep in years. A piteous expression of woe tried to secrete itself in a smile about his lips. His well-worn shoes were blackened to a pathetic respectability. A loose linen collar, a creased, formless tie, frayed trouser ends that rode his ankles, and a slouch hat bearing the honest shine of wear — these signs proclaimed poverty as the portion of this Mr. Woods.

Jim Fulton surveyed the newcomer doubtfully. Mr. Woods, divining accusation, leveled a business card beneath Jim Fulton's nose :

ALBERT C. WOODS

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR GALEVILLE *Eagle*

"Huh! Go in," said Fulton, shaking his head distrustfully.

Edward Harrison was not pleased to see Mr. Woods. However, he introduced the latter to his son — apologetically.

The Galeville *Eagle* was in distress — again — said Mr. Woods. Creditors were clamoring, and if

CONGENIAL EMPLOYMENT 55

the sum of \$250 was not forthcoming by Saturday, the august *Eagle* would be felled to earth by the sheriff's hammer. Mr. Wood's weary eyes moistened. Then he smiled but it was a wan, sad smile of hope dogged continually by defeat.

Jack gathered that his father had rescued the *Eagle* on three or four occasions, and that, on call, it had screeched feebly in his behalf in return for these subsidies.

"I didn't know you were interested in a newspaper," commented Jack.

"I didn't want you to know," returned the father.

"And the Galeville *Eagle*, too. That's over in Mahoos County, dad."

"Oh — I may want something over in Mahoos County some day."

"Mr. Harrison, Mahoos County will give you anything you want — governor, United States senator — anything," put in Mr. Woods. The petition for \$250 had not been refused thus far at least.

"Jack, suppose you go to Galeville with Mr. Woods and take a look at his newspaper plant. If you think it has sufficient prospects to be worth a \$250 risk, let me know."

"I don't quite understand," said Jack.

"Why, let me know if \$250 will tide this man over for a month or two. I wouldn't want the paper to expire for the sake of a few hundred. Bother!

Draw on me for what you think the *Eagle* needs. Some day — Um! You never can tell.”

“Hope I’m not inconveniencing you by dragging you off to look over a little country newspaper,” said Mr. Woods, as he and Jack Harrison embarked on a trolley car for Galeville.

“No apologies necessary, Mr. Woods. Investigating newspapers is the best thing I do,” rejoined Jack Harrison at the noon of his happiest day in five years.

CHAPTER V

JOYS AND A REBUFF

GALEVILLE — ten thousand souls, a wharf, three factories, and the county court house. You could not make much more of Galeville if you tried. The local Board of Trade had attempted it by billboard-ing the railroad line with the information that the world was watching Galeville grow. But it was useless. The world was not impressed. Galeville had no statesman, outfielder, bank wrecker, or breakfast food to make it famous. It was simply a harbor for the first run of shad, a ten-minute stop on the Roosevelt itinerary, and the testing ground of the commercial value of two taxicabs.

Galeville was ten miles from Telford City by trolley, nine miles by train, and eight miles by the boats that plied the Maugatee River. When you took the boat you took your time because the Maugatee was full of sand bars, and your vessel had to move past them at a mere crawl. The government scooped out the sand bars by dredger every October, but the bars were back in their old places

58 THE MAN WHO WON

every March in time to pester the river pilots going on duty for the spring traffic.

Saturday was Galeville day in Telford City. Somehow there was never a Telford City day in Galeville. It was averred in Telford City that one could recognize a Galeville inhabitant offhand by symbolic signs; bundles and bird cages, Galeville street mud plastered on shoe heels, an inquisitiveness that browsed at shop windows and marveled at commonplace street sights, cheeks that told of the milk and curds of the countryside, wired ties, outlawed hat shapes, and an inexplicable love for popcorn. Mention "Galeville" upon the Telford City stage and the audience became convulsed.

And to think his father had interested himself in a Galeville newspaper! Jack Harrison grinned. Looking at seedy Mr. Woods as the objective point of his father's dollars, the fact was hard to conceive. Yet it was true, as witness his own presence on a big high-powered electric car that was this very moment sweeping through the slumberous cottage section of Galeville. These dwellings were white and precise; not a fence paling was awry. Front gates were methodically shut-to by weights. Wire chairs and settees in the side yards suggested the lolling hours of hot summer afternoons. On every grass plat were gorgeously painted tubs soon to be seeded for the spring flowerings.

"It must be awful to live here," muttered Jack Harrison. He could picture the winter evenings in those low-ceilinged rooms, the shadowy depths beyond the lamp gleam, the pettiness of affairs, the dullness of life.

"Not at all," remonstrated Mr. Woods stoutly. "The men here eat, drink, smoke, and criticize the government with the normal pleasure of mankind the world over. The women gossip, visit and raise children. Everybody knows everybody else. The whole town is your neighbor. Jabez Little went to New York for his two weeks' vacation and came back homesick on his third day. The young men shoot bottle pool, the girls watch the trains come in, and the kids play kick-the-wicket in front of the Drivers' National Bank. We work and sleep, live and die as other men — it only looks worse here. . . . There's the *Eagle* office, Mr. Harrison."

Jack saw the once noble figure of an eagle jutting beyond the second story windows of an old frame building. Closer inspection revealed the fact that the eagle's paint had peeled away in many spots, and that several of his metal talons were broken. A discomfited, badly-molted bird — a fitting figure-head for a badly-molted business.

The ground floor was occupied by the town telegraph office, before which stood the chief of police

(who did patrol duty), a cowhide-booted farmer come to market, a colored stable hostler, and two substantial citizens with views to air to any one who might stop and listen.

"How do, Chief — Cy — Mose! How do George!" called Mr. Woods familiarly.

"How do, Mr. Woods," they replied. Gentlemen of the press and of the bar were decorously "mister-ed" in Galeville.

"Look out for these steps — treacherous," warned Mr. Woods as they mounted the staircase. At the landing, he pushed open a door fortified with tin on the outer panels to bar the hallway blasts. They poked their way into the editorial room across bundles of matrices, overturned boxes, heaps of uncut exchanges, waste and dust, reaching a clear haven in a far corner where reposed Mr. Woods' desk of labor. Woods waved Jack into the editorial chair and himself took the seat for visitors, a small unbacked bench. The walls were shedding their pristine flowered paper. Laths were gaping through plaster. Here and there were pictures — contributed pictures — lithographs of party candidates, paintings of steamships, and photographs of fire engine companies. Discarded "copy" and clippings had been swept underneath a formidable wardrobe into which had been cast the junk of ages. The editorial room of the *Eagle* gave a permanent im-

pression of débris, topsyturvydom and drooping business.

"We publish once a week — Saturdays," said Mr. Woods, "but sometimes we have to sweat to do it. I've seen the time when the edition was held up until Monday morning before we were able to lift an attachment of thirteen dollars. Raising thirteen dollars in Galeville is sometimes as involved a piece of finance as floating a liberty loan. Then I've seen the time when we had to omit paying the salaries of the help —"

"The help? How many?" asked Harrison.

"Two — Lem Andrews and myself; we get out the paper between us. Lem is our typesetter; he sets up the whole eight pages. Over a column an hour is his speed. But sometimes even Lem must skip his pay-day. He'll get his money, of course, and Lem is a fellow who don't care when. I owe him eighty-five dollars now, yet he puts in the solidest eight hours work of any 'typo' who ever tapped a keyboard."

"And you're the only other worker here?" marveled Harrison.

"Yes, I'm proprietor, publisher, editorial writer, city editor, reportorial staff, telephone girl, advertising manager, circulation solicitor, office boy, and janitor. No wonder I look as if I had insomnia since birth. I've had the *Eagle* five years, worked

like a horse weekdays and Sundays, and the sum total of all my efforts is that I'm in the hole four hundred dollars."

"Any assets?"

"Yes, a wife and three children." Mr. Woods' wistful smile of suffering wreathed his peaked features once again. Jack glanced down at Woods' woeful shoes for which his blacking brush had done its best.

"Say, Woods, tell me the truth — has the *Eagle* a chance?" suddenly queried Harrison.

"Yes, it has," Woods answered determinedly. "The trouble is, I have too much to do. If I could get an assistant to take some of this drudgery off my shoulders I could go out and get business — advertisements and subscriptions. I need the outdoor work, too. I can't last much longer slaving in this dog-hole."

"What sort of an assistant would you want?"

"A man to write some of the editorials, handle copy, correct proofs, and get up a few local stories. I would furnish most of the local copy and attend entirely to the business end. . . . But I can't afford to pay for an assistant."

"Tell you what I'll do, Woods. I'll buy half an interest in this paper and come here to work two days each week. What's a half interest worth?"

"It isn't worth a cent, Mr. Harrison, telling you

the truth. All I own is this furniture. The type-setting machine is hired; we get our press work done at Gifford's, the job printer; I couldn't peddle the good will of this plant for sixty cents. But if you feel —"

"I do, Woods. I'll pay the paper's debts and give you five hundred dollars for a half interest. I'll furnish my services gratis for the next three months, and then will make a new arrangement as to salary if the paper is paying at that time."

"Can you write editorials?"

"I can," responded Harrison.

"Where'd you ever write editorials before?" quizzed Woods.

"In my library at home. I've got a drawerful of them."

"Well, I need the cash. It's a go," replied Woods. "I hope we'll give your father his money's worth. But, Lawks! Mr. Harrison, how comes it that you are so eager —"

"Mr. Woods, I'm stuck on this newspaper game. Come, let's get this partnership agreement drawn up."

"Mr. Simonds — he's the lawyer at the corner of —"

"He'll do."

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It was at three-thirty in the afternoon when Jack

Harrison was endowed by elaborately signed, sealed and delivered instruments of law to have and to hold one-half interest in the Galesville *Eagle* with the appurtenances thereunto belonging. As he stepped from Attorney Simonds' doorway to the bricked pavement of South Main Street, he cast a smiling, fraternal glance upon a few citizens who were walking along this avenue of trade. These were to be his compatriots two days a week in the future! He determined to get some pointers from Woods about these people — their aims, idiosyncrasies, and prejudices. He must saturate himself with Galeville!

He glanced down the street at the row of modest store fronts. There was nothing so dreadfully bucolic in the three blocks looking north. He could even distinguish fire escapes on some of the buildings. Also he had noticed cut-rate drug stores, and premium-awarding cigar stores, and a dental "parlor" boasting of a uniformed attendant who saluted the passersby. A goodly number of farmers were to be seen going in and out of stores, Galeville being the purchasing center of the surrounding country. There was a hay rick or two within sight, and the inevitable local trotting phenomenon being exercised to sulky. A Greek shoe shine niche where lads dabbed leather to the steely grating of a phonograph march, a German butcher shop with a frozen outdoor display of meats, Italian fruit stands, two

Chinese laundries that gave off odors of boiling clothes, Hebraic clothing emporiums with their paper-collared dummies — these comprised the Broadway of Galeville.

Harrison and Woods were reëntering the lower doorway of the *Eagle* office when the editor was halted by a girl's voice near at hand.

"Mr. Woods! A moment — please." A young lady hastened toward him and handed him an envelope.

"A sheriff's sale advertisement. Things going all right, Mr. Woods?" she asked.

"Fine — fine!" he replied.

"I'm so glad," she remarked quietly. Her tones were murmurs that caressed. Jack looked at her — approved of her — and inwardly cursed Woods for failing to introduce him. She was off in a moment with a sweet smile lighting up her face, — a small rounded face which was that of a child's, in contour, yet of a mature woman in its expression of intellect ablaze.

"Good Lord, but she's a peach!" Harrison blurted out.

"Like her?"

"You bet."

"I'll fix it. . . . She's Alice Lane, Sheriff Lane's daughter."

"The present sheriff of Mahoos County?"

"Yes," said Woods.

"Why in the world didn't you introduce me?"

"I clean forgot, Mr. Harrison. That five-hundred dollar check in my pocket has plumb rattled my wits. I should have known better. Everybody takes a liking to Alice Lane. Tell you what I'll do — she's just gone into Draper's store; on her way home she stops in Miller's for a soda; come on up to Miller's. We'll lay for her."

"I'm your man," retorted Harrison.

After quarter of an hour's loitering at Miller's, they saw the girl coming down the street, innocent of the dire plot. Somehow those lynx furs, that long-feathered hat, seemed to have had a place in Jack's memory for ages — they individualized her; she seemed inseparable from the suggestive presence of them. But her face had not been so subtly remembered; he thrilled for the next glance at it. The door latch clicked and she came in. Harrison's eyes were directed upon a menu of drinks; his neck was warming, red.

"Will you have something, Miss Lane?" hazarded Woods. Harrison's neck waxed warmer. She assented, and then Woods tapped Harrison on the shoulder.

"Mr. Harrison — Miss Lane."

"Not Mr. Harrison of Telford City?" she inquired blithely.

"Yes. Are *we* so terrible?" Jack laughed.

"No, indeed. We're in politics, too, you know. On the opposite side, though," she added.

"Well, we can be friends."

"Why not? Chocolate soda, Mr. Goodrich."

For an interminable period the trio were interested in the lithe movements of white-coated Mr. Goodrich.

"Ever come to Telford City?" Harrison ventured at length.

"Once in a while — to the theater. But I'm home most of the time," replied Miss Lane. "I'm not one of those who berate Galeville. I stick up for Galeville. I've never lived anywhere else."

"We hold some very nice dances in Telford —"

"We do, too, in Galeville."

"I'd like to take —" he began, daringly premature in his acceleration of their acquaintance.

"Going, Mr. Woods?" she asked.

"Yes," said Woods, "I'll have to leave. See you Friday, Mr. Harrison."

Well rid of Woods, Jack settled down to lay siege to Miss Alice Lane. Thus far he had progressed poorly. She was addressing herself devotedly to soda. Her abstraction nettled him. Evidently she had not been greatly impressed.

"I suppose you're wondering what I'm doing in Galeville," he led off.

"Why—I hadn't thought of it." This came rather tartly from her.

Jack cursed himself for his awkwardness. His usually reliant poise was sadly absent—just when he wanted it most—for the first time in his recollection.

"I'm coming to Galeville two days a week," he continued. "I don't think it's going to be painful—*now*."

She laughed. "*Indeed!*"

"I certainly hope to meet you again, Miss Lane. I really do. May I hope—"

"One may always hope—even in Galeville."

"And won't you permit me to walk home with you?"

"I'm not going home. I'm paying two calls."

"But this evening—"

"Oh! Mr. Harrison. . . . Such impatience!"

"I am impatient."

She extended her hand. "I must be going." Her smile was anything: friendly, formal—repressive, complaisant. It puzzled Harrison and it goaded him.

"So—I am not to see you, then."

"I'm afraid not."

She disappeared in an instant.

He saw lynx furs and unfathomable eyes long after she had left him alone at the cold marble counter.

CHAPTER VI

DORIS INTRUDES

WINTER was battling for its last hold; the snow of a recent storm was patched upon bleak hillsides; ponds were thinly glassed with new ice, and the wind bit sharply these blowy days. Sunshine was meager, and, consequently, the promise of spring was as yet unuttered. Of vernal signs that strike hope into the drear, wintered heart, there were none.

During these cheerless weeks, Jack Harrison visited Galeville on his appointed Fridays and Saturdays. But he had not seen Alice Lane. That grieved him enormously. . . . The *Eagle* was perk-
ing up slightly. That was some recompense for his labor. He had loafed many hours in Miller's Drug Store, but without avail. Miss Lane had a way of arriving just after he went off watch, or leaving a moment before his arrival. It was evident that she was not to be thus enmeshed. He had thought of writing to her, but dismissed the idea instantly; he realized that he had already been bungling enough. Perhaps he would not care so much for her if he

really knew her well! She might be insipid. Outward graces might be misleading. What if her vivacity stopped with her eyes? — her winsomeness with her smile? But — bother it all! — she *would not* stay insipid or dull or unappealing in his thoughts. She would thrust herself forward, a divine being. Yes, he would wait!

The Galeville *Eagle*, receiving the benefit of Jack Harrison's attention and financial support, had braced up perceptibly in the last few issues. Woods had been scouting in all the unlikely corners of Galeville's commerce, and had garnered some new advertisements. This much might be said of the *Eagle's* progress: it was not losing as much money as formerly.

Jack Harrison was doing his full share of the work in sending the *Eagle* to press. His editorials were in the compositor's hands early in the week. They were not profound editorials such as the Galeville reading eye had been accustomed to, but gossipy little discourses of quite a cynical nature such as youth will sometimes compose when not under restraint of a curbing hand. He lampooned some town evils which were most patent to his perception, and proposed a series of civic improvements. For several days the press ran off a few hundred extra copies in honor of the "reorganization"; the *Eagle* was mailed free to persons anti-*Eagle*. A little

flurry of interest was actually created, and on the strength of this slight glow upon the horizon, Woods had a carpenter erect a pine counter in the editorial office for the purpose of receiving "business." Harrison started a column of original wisdom dressed in dialect, but Galeville looked upon dialect as frivolity. He therefore discontinued that line and substituted a weekly "boiler plate" agricultural department on seedlings and chicken care and weather forecasts. "That hoss poultice of *yours* is all right," one subscriber said to Harrison. "I tried it onto Ned, our ole sorrel, and it done wonders." After that Harrison read over his farm department with anxious care in order to be at least superficially versed in the lore attributed to him.

Harrison also managed to pick up a number of excellent local "yarns" during the languid hours of his picketing at Miller's. In fact he gathered in three first-rate "stories" which had been missed by the daily *Star*. He found that some citizens would divulge these "exclusives" to a stranger like himself rather than hand them over to the redoubtable news-gatherers of the leading paper. In many quarters there was antipathy to the *Star*; in all places there was fear of its power. Harrison decided that there was no better place to watch for news than Miller's — while waiting for the lynx furs topped by the long feathered hat.

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Harrison's monthly visit to Doris Edwards became due. Regretfully he set out for Wanoyne Terrace, the new section of Telford City where stores are barred and where a house must be surrounded by a lawn.

Doris welcomed him eagerly, but sad-eyed. She was beautiful, Jack admitted. This night she appeared particularly attractive in a green gown cut rather décolleté.

"You'll want to smoke — come in here, Jack," she said, leading him into a draped alcove in the hallway. The alcove was scented with her favorite perfume — heliotrope. Jack's pulse was not quickened. He saw no phantasy of love in the mirroring depths of her eyes; he saw bluish eyes — nothing else. Her arm with its dimpled curves, snuggled in the soft hollow of the cushions. Jack Harrison, unimpressed, blew smoke rings to the curtained ceiling.

"You seem bored," she remarked. Her brow furrowed prettily.

"No, indeed." He was puffing his cigarette furiously.

"But you're so quiet. Jack, this is the first time you've been here in over three weeks, and you're about as talkative as a clam."

"But I've just arrived, Doris."

"Haven't you seen anybody — heard anything?"

Tell me something. Good Heavens, I've been indoors for three wretched days, and I'm nearly frantic with lonesomeness. . . . You don't know how I've been looking forward to your coming here to-night. I don't have any one else coming here any more."

"You should, though."

"I should? What do you mean?"

Her body straightened; she had forsaken her easy, graceful position.

"What is the use of permitting me to take up all of your time?" he said.

"You don't. You take up so little of it," she flashed back.

"I mean," he resumed, "—why do you have only me coming here?"

"Because I want only you —"

"Doris, you know what I'm driving at. . . . Shucks! . . . We're not engaged. I'm not the marrying —"

"See here, Jack Harrison, I don't care anything about that. Marrying? Laws, I've only turned eighteen. No. . . . I just want you to come here and talk to me, and keep me from getting so dreadfully blue. I have gone downtown hoping to get a glimpse of you. I met all the other men, *of course*. They tell me how well I look, and make furious love, and beg me to let them call. And I say to myself: 'That's it — every man but the one I

want. Jack Harrison does not tell me I'm pretty or say he'd like to kiss me. No! When I do manage to run into him by accident on the street, he smokes and yawns and says most likely he'll see me three weeks from Wednesday night! . . . What happens to me, then? Why, my world stops moving until three weeks from Wednesday night. What do I do? Accept invitations to dance and be merry — and have love made to me? I guess not. I sit by the telephone evenings and think: 'I can bring his voice to me in an instant. Shall I?' And then my pride tells me not to be so silly, for Jack Harrison doesn't care a snap of his finger for me. Jack, I wouldn't mind if I grew to be a grayhaired old maid . . . if you stayed single . . . if you'd come out to see me often . . . and not have any one else . . . for I can't do without you . . . Jack!"

She was sobbing in her big chair, a huddled, pitiful figure with her beautiful arm hiding her face. Jack's heart smote him. It was a tender heart in most circumstances; doubly tender in the midst of woman's tears. Doris seemed but a child with her eighteen years, a woman-child prematurely faced with a big fact of life — the indifference of man to aught but his own object of worship. He laid the palm of his hand on her slim cheek. "Don't cry, Doris. Some of your folks might come in —"

"I don't care. . . . They know."

How would it all end? This question worried him. He must absolutely give up seeing Doris. She was plainly incapable of anything but this harrowing lovemaking. He pitied her. He remembered how she had been going around with boys since she was fifteen. Her parents had taken this attention as a mark of honor. She had always worshiped Jack Harrison. When she reached seventeen she had been bundled off with parental smiles to dances; oftentimes she had ridden to and from these events with men of the world, some of whom had sought to caress this pretty child. Jack Harrison, with privilege to do so, had not caressed her. In his code, however exalted or base it might be, seventeen was seventeen. And since she became older his circumspection had increased with her temerity. Now he faced a problem as to a means of charitably escaping her.

"I just know you won't come here again — after this scene," she said, more calmly.

"Don't talk that way, Doris."

"Then will you come again?"

"Y-yes."

"When?"

Her point-blankness discommoded him.

"Now, Doris, I sha'n't make any engagements to see you while you're in this state. You've cried your eyes red. You must stop this."

"All right, Jack. Forgive me."

She was penitent, yet hopeful. She smiled upon her enthroned god. The enthroned god fidgeted, and lit another cigarette. He was wondering how many minutes it lacked of ten o'clock at which time he might withdraw with grace. He dared not look at his watch. It was only a few minutes after nine.

The door bell rang, and the maid was presently admitting callers. Jack breathed relief. The tension of the last half hour had been racking.

The maid announced Jason Storridge and Muriel Clayton. Doris frowned, rubbed her eyes nervously and led the way to the drawing-room. Muriel embraced her.

"Jason and I stopped in to see if you'd go with us to the Hotel Lafayette — prize one-stepping to-night," said Muriel. "We have a table reserved. We won't take *no* for an answer. We can get there in haff an hour."

"Half an hour easily," corroborated Storridge, who was always American in his pronunciation of Muriel's best Anglicisms.

Upon Doris' consent they were soon driving toward the city in Storridge's electric.

"Haven't seen you at the club in an age," declared Storridge to Harrison. "Have you gone in for prohibition?"

"Nearly. I'm an ice-cream fiend now." He

could taste the chocolate of Mr. Goodrich's artistry, — could smell Miller's drugs, — could see a delightful, defiant maiden mocking his clumsy efforts to become better acquainted.

"Given up the law, haven't you, Harrison?"

"Oh — well," said Doris, *meaning* but not saying: "It was to be expected. Jack Harrison and the law? Impossible."

"I'm with my father now as secretary," added Jack with slight emphasis.

"Say, I'd rather have your job than be mayor," avowed Storridge, warmly. "Really — you know what I mean — standing behind the scenes, like. Lord! I bet you hear things. One day's earful and I guess you could make some big fellows sweat. . . . I know three or four people in this town I'd like to make sweat. Say, Harrison, do you suppose you could get some hot stuff on some of those snobs out Laurel Avenue way for me? Could you?"

"Why?"

"They blackballed me at the Kipewa Club."

"Blackballed by men who haven't so much as a second servant in their homes," added Muriel indignantly. "When Jason told me, I became furious."

"Take the Motleys — broke — busted. Won't work — rather starve," continued Storridge. "Harrington Motley doesn't own a thing but a

78 THE MAN WHO WON

tennis racquet. Who's he to blackball me? Take Lou Throckmorton — makes twenty-five dollars a week and spends fifteen on flowers so that he can marry into money. What's he trailing that homely Cornelia Wilson for? Hm!"

"And take the Guildford girls — a tailormade apiece in the spring, and ten days at the seashore in the summer," added Muriel. "A positively poverty-stricken family."

"Why do you want to get into the Kipewa Club? Isn't the Washington Club —" Jack began.

"The Washington Club is admitting too many trashy upstarts," hotly objected Jason Storridge, who, twenty years before, had eaten in the kitchen on his mother's knee, there having been no dining-room in the Storridge mansion, nor any great amount of furniture in the "parlor" aside from a maple double-bed and a child's crib.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE REALM OF THE HEART

TABLES for the prize dancing contest had been reserved by the Mullses both for their own edification and that of their guest, Mrs. Graydon, who was again visiting them. The Mullses derived *éclat* from their sponsorship of that scintillating somebody. Mrs. Graydon was an emissary from a land of magic name whose minor doings were enravishing to the Telford City mind. Her gowns put an awe in the breast of the town dressmakers. Then there was her charm — a something too subtle, too elvish to find its counterpart in the rugged directness of the women of the Mulls' circle. Yet these very women were impressed when Mrs. Graydon gushed and frivoled. Their prejudices against feminine theatrical behavior were permitted to lapse in her case. To top off her achievements, receiving devoted attention from Edward Harrison. Therefore the Mullses were proud unto exquisite elation.

The Hotel Lafayette dancing — saved from ec-

clesiastical wrath by Edward Harrison's secret power — was sensationally successful. The three dining-rooms were jammed nightly, and nightly the mass flowed upon a rectangle of waxed wood to seek the delights of "society steps."

The Mulls party swept in regally at nine. There were Mr. and Mrs. Henry Mulls, Mrs. Graydon, Edward Harrison, Miss Matilda Mulls, and her latest social experiment, Oswald Griffiths. The proprietor of the Hotel Lafayette personally seated them. His gratitude to Edward Harrison would have uncorked a hundred champagne bottles.

The notes of a dance summoned the Mullses, old and young, to the floor. Edward Harrison did not dance; at least he said he did not.

"I'm sorry I don't," he lamented to Mrs. Graydon.

"Pshaw! Now don't you practice just a little bit in your bedroom? Admit it."

"No, I don't. I'm too old for that."

"Old? Look at Henry Mulls out there. Couldn't you limp to music better than that? Come — I'll take you out on the floor. See what confidence I have in your agility?"

"I refuse — for your sake," he laughed.

"I shouldn't mind. One would never feel awkward with you — even if you stumbled."

"Thanks — Emily."

THE REALM OF THE HEART 81

"Ah! I love to hear you call me that. Now I feel sure we're acquainted."

"We are, aren't we?" he said, softly.

She assented. His eyes leveled eloquently upon her eyes. There was no questioning his meaning. It was a big moment in their lives. . . . The Mullses returned, bringing other topics of conversation.

"Fierce crowd to-night," said Matilda Mulls. "The whole East End is here. I should think the management —"

"Tut! tut! Matilda," reproved Henry Mulls, who would not tolerate derogation of the East End. His aged mother still lived there. To his mind the East End conveyed the sacredness of his early struggles.

"Heavens! The shirt waists and the dowdy skirts!" ejaculated Matilda, undisturbed by her father's attitude. "You'd think they'd want to quit looking like shopgirls in a place like this."

"There's Grace Hillary in a shirt waist and skirt. She's no shopgirl," reproved Henry Mulls.

"Oh! so it is," replied Matilda.

"And there's Sue Guildford in one of those cloth pull-down hats," said Henry Mulls with a certain ineptness of description. "I guess you'd like to be sitting at her table, eh, Matilda?"

"How about her?" exclaimed Matilda, as she gazed at a group of young folks — members of the

town's superior caste — not one of whom was richly bedecked. Matilda envied their informal ease. Her own satin gown and showy furs seemed cheap. Why had she dressed so extraordinarily to come to a prize-dance crush? Nor was she proud of Oswald Griffith's dress suit which had so distinctly overshadowed Edward Harrison's sedate sack? None of the men in Grace Hillary's party wore evening clothes. Oswald Griffiths was wrong; she was wrong; Mr. Harrison was right; as was her father and the Hillarys. Even the shop-girls were right. Matilda pouted as she watched the young men and women from Laurel Avenue.

Mrs. Graydon, who had detected a weakness in the social claims and pretensions of the Mulls' set, perceived now the truth. So the Mulls and the Clydes and the Harrisons were not the real leaders. Odd, too, she thought — Mr. Harrison being the undoubted ruler of affairs in Telford City. Why was he not a coadjutor of the Hillarys, the Guildfords and the Motleys? He ought to be — *could be*, no doubt, if he set his power to accomplish it. Undoubtedly he did not aspire to this social sphere. Men were so heedless of social glory, especially notable men like Edward Harrison. Mrs. Graydon sighed resignedly.

The snare drum was thump-thumping invitingly, and the Mullses again rushed for the rectangle.

THE REALM OF THE HEART 88

"Tell me about the Hillarys and the Motleys," said Mrs. Graydon, when she and Harrison were free to talk alone. "Do you know them?"

"Oh, yes."

"But you do not go around with them."

"No, I have never endeavored to. I suppose I might force my way in. The men often come to me for favors. But the truth is, I've never gone anywhere until the last few weeks — since you came, in fact."

"Sorry I came?" she tilted her head roguishly. He liked these little coquetries. They enhanced rather than diminished her attractiveness. They brought his youth up to date — a revived memory that caused his pulses to throb lustily.

"Indeed, I'm not sorry you came. I'll be sorry when you go back to New York. Must you go back? Won't you stay?"

"Stay?"

"Yes — always — in Telford City — with me."

"Yes, Edward, I'll stay with you."

And Edward Harrison heard not a word of the floor manager's announcement that Miss Dorothy McGrew had won the silver cup for ladies. . . . He had just won Emily Graydon.

Upon Harrison's quick decision that the present was as good as any other time, the Mullses were

straightway informed of the important news. It was their handiwork that had culminated so happily! It had been a delicate affair, subtly managed, they thought to themselves. Outwardly,—they rejoiced in champagne.

Then Edward Harrison saw his son and Doris Edwards within the rectangle, and in due time he had Jack summoned for a talk in the smoking room.

"Jack, your dad is going to be married," said Harrison the elder without so much as an introductory warning.

"What? Married?" Jack put a steadying finger against his nose. It was his sole sign of perturbation.

"Yes, to Mrs. Graydon."

"Congratulations, dad. Shake. . . . Well, well!"

"Surprised?"

"Yes. I never thought you would. But it's a good idea."

Privately, Jack was not so sure that it was a good idea. Edward Harrison was charmed to believe that his son thought it a *good idea*. He had been a little doubtful about Jack. Fifty-four marrying thirty-two—any son might justifiably revolt against such a union. With Jack satisfied there was not a shadow upon the romance.

THE REALM OF THE HEART 85

Edward Harrison laid his hand upon his son's knee. His steely, worldwise eyes softened.

"Jack, I want you to continue to live with me . . . when Emily comes. There'll be no great change. You're Jackie Harrison still — the lad in bare legs and socks — and always will be . . . to me. The house is yours to come and go as before. You'll be company for us. Emily wants it that way. You'll like her. Call her Emily. Let her be your big sister — none of this nonsense about a second mother. That'd be rot at our ages. Just treat her well, Jack . . . that's all."

"I'll do everything I can to please her."

"I knew you would. Come; you must wish her joy."

In his mild effective way Jack made known to his handsome mother-elect — or his new big sister, as his father would have it — how happy he was over the news. She had not expected such spontaneous graciousness. A daughter would never have yielded so delightfully to the invader as had the son.

"Will you dance this — Emily?" asked Jack, taking Mrs. Graydon by the arm. "Emily" had come easily from his tongue. The naturalness, the calm of the young man in the midst of such an event charmed her.

"Certainly, Jack; I'd like to," she responded. He winked at his father, and his father winked at

him. Edward Harrison began to think how he had failed to value at a higher degree his treasure of a son. Jack had a kind heart; Jack had diplomatic finish; Jack had a streak of his own practical cunning. In a word, Jack had the brains to grasp a hair-spring situation intelligently. Edward Harrison doted on having situations handled intelligently. Every worker in his organization was schooled to do that much. Jack was a success, he granted.

"Don't tell me you were surprised," said Emily Graydon to her partner. She was dancing with a lissome swing that accorded well with their new understanding. He would never feel constrained with this woman, he felt.

"I was surprised. . . . Never heard a thing."

"Why, Jack! Your father has twice been over to New York to see me."

"He never asked my permission. He might have taken a fellow along."

"No doubt he was a little offish about you. Fathers generally are in a case like this. But he has no reason to feel that way, it turned out. You have been splendid. And you are to be his best man."

"The wedding is to be soon?"

"Yes, and it is to be quiet. Your father dare not have a big wedding. He'd have to invite half the town or slight the men whose loyalty is his power. Invite nobody and everybody will

THE REALM OF THE HEART 87

be flattered. . . . Do let us dance the encore."

As they resumed, she launched gayly into her plans — they were to entertain on quite an imposing scale; Edward Harrison was to count as big socially as he counted in the busy world of men; Jack was to be her aide, and was to marshal the forces of young people that were to be a part of this ambitious setting.

Jack was inclined to think that her gayety scarcely hid a serious, deep-laid intent to perpetrate something revolutionary against the social life of Telford City.

He brought Emily Graydon back to her affianced in high good humor, and then bade the party good-night. Quickly he rejoined his waiting companions, to whom the news of the Harrison-Graydon match had preceded him via Matilda Mulls.

Muriel Clayton's congratulations were spectacular, Storridge's perfunctory, Doris' timid. In fact Doris was quite bewildered. She was wondering how the marriage would affect the well-being of Jack Harrison. Beyond that she felt no concern. Her loving thoughts pictured Jack in a state of eclipse and martyrdom growing out of this family readjustment.

"I'm so glad to hear the news," declared Muriel. "Mrs. Graydon is positively lovely — an extraordinary woman."

"Gee! — the marriages this spring," chirruped Storridge. "There's the Springer-Todd wedding, and Muriel and I, and Kate Still, and your father, Jack. Every one's getting married. Lord! Why don't you step in, Jack? You and Doris wouldn't make such a badly matched pair."

Storridge roared.

Doris was in a terrible flutter from Storridge's suggestion. Her eyes flashed fire, her cheeks were scarlet.

And Jack Harrison's thoughts had taken sudden flight to Galeville.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SHERIFF'S METHODS

THE Mahoos County Court House was a squat mass of masonry erected in the 50's upon the center of a public square. Growing Galeville had never been permitted to encroach a foot upon this domain. The Court House lay marooned upon an extensive tract in the very heart of the town. From the Court House steps to the nearest public street, in any direction you might choose, it was at least an eighth of a mile across parkland. In the hot days of the June court term, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and idlers lounged beneath the maple trees during the noon recess. Flowers laid out in the grotesque beds held the languid June eye. Robins hopped prettily about. Squirrels ran beneath the benches undismayed. Ice cream was sold here, and some of the big men of the commonwealth munched cones with boy-like gusto. Even judges had been known to eat their pocket lunches in the cooling shade.

Famous criminals, at liberty under bail, had spent their last moments of freedom here. Some notable scuffles, too, had taken place on the sedate gravel

walks, and, according to the yarns of loquacious constables long in service, a few bullets had whizzed through the maple lanes.

In March the environs of the Court House were dismal and forbidding. Board walks had been placed atop the muddy paths. The ground was soft from melted snow. The plumber's wrench had silenced the park fountain these many months.

Just now the board-walks were resounding with the tread of citizens bent on official business — going to and from the offices of the county clerk, the sheriff, the county engineer, and the other dignitaries of the building. A few men had gathered about the massive Corinthian columns at the entrance; these were the members of the jury panel waiting the call for the next jury. They were arguing with the earnest understanding of laymen the many gnarled points of law. Life and death, poverty and riches, peace of mind, tears, were ordained by these very ordinary men in Sunday clothes.

The front portion of the Court House was buzzingly official; the rear was buzzingly domestic. Here were the living quarters of Sheriff Seth Lane, of his mild little wife and his interesting daughter. Adjoining the sheriff's office — which had to do with the noisy, pestering public — was the sheriff's dim quiet parlor, a dull place, indeed, filled as it was with the furniture and adornments purchased with

THE SHERIFF'S METHODS 91

the public moneys and selected by the inartistic eye of official committees. Where otherwise would you find an oak davenport matched against mahogany chairs and two cherry tables? And a cabinet of stuffed birds, and a relief map of Mahoos County? Alice Lane tolerated the birds, but the relief map was her special torment. Yet Sheriff Lane held out against its removal.

Back of the parlor was the dining-room, another dismal place of stone walls and barred windows. In fact the windows of all the living-rooms were iron-grated to prevent the escape of the inmates of the prison; wretches whom the law commanded Sheriff Lane to hold in confinement.

The dining-room was the most dolorous spot in the sheriff's home. Even a Christmas dinner failed to enliven the place. The windows were low-set, and there little blurred panes gave a queer view of objects outdoors. The ceiling was too high, and the floor too cold, and the doors too ponderous to lend even a tolerable touch of home to the room. On a rainy day the mournful *tink-tink* of a dozen rain-spouts would give a touch of the "blues" to almost any one. Not, however, to Sheriff Lane. To his mind a dining-room conveyed the idea of a table for food; but not necessarily a tablecloth. He could see nothing objectionable in this dungeon of a room. Mrs. Lane loathed it and yet endured it. Alice

usually ate breakfast and luncheon in her own room. She would join her family for the evening meal in the dreary chamber, a rather ceremonious repast, with food supplied gratis by tradesmen with whom the sheriff had snug county contracts. This was the hour, too, of the sheriff's wine and his waggery. He would narrate with great bursts of laughter how he had strung up Jeff Stevens, the negro, and what Nance Kershaw, she of the streets, was doing in her cell to pass the long hours while awaiting trial. "She had crab cutlets brought in again to-day. Money? Dod! she's a bank. I ain't kickin' 'bout Nance. She pays me cash down for everything. Wisht I had a jailful like her." Then the sheriff would smirk at his wife and daughter over his glass.

If the dining-room was doleful, the sitting-room was little less cheerful. It was directly adjoining the jail quarters. Into the sitting-room came the constant horror of jail noises — the metallic click of doors, moans, the tirades of low women, drunken curses. On Sundays there was funereal hymn-singing in the corridors. An air for the gallows, of doomed mortality pervaded the home of Seth Lane, Sheriff of Mahoos County.

Cooking odors drifted into the sheriff's sitting-room. On Friday — fish day — the odor was unbearable. The cooking of stew or soup was as easily detected. Stew or soup was often the only dish

THE SHERIFF'S METHODS 93

served at meals, due to the fact that Sheriff Seth Lane was paid by the county on a per diem basis for feeding his charges. Sheriff Seth Lane was an inordinate grafter.

Seth Lane, high sheriff of Mahoos County, father of tender-hearted Alice Lane and spouse of the little, inoffensive Maria Lane, was an unscrupulous money-grabber and rascal. Mrs. Lane knew him to be a money-grabber and a rascal. Alice Lane knew him merely as a money-grabber. Like the majority of good citizens of Mahoos County, she had not discovered that he was a rascal.

By half starving the prisoners Sheriff Lane pocketed a neat profit every day of his life. From butchers of the town he bought inferior meats. The beef formed the basis of jail stew and jail soup. Hot water flavored with beef and named stew, will sustain human life the sheriff contended. Crumbly bread from three days to a week old, and coffee of ill repute in wholesale marts, constituted the remainder of the menu of the Lane economy kitchen. The coffee was sweetened with molasses and served black. Milk, sugar, and butter were unknown. Potatoes were occasionally served; other vegetables not at all. Fruit appeared on Christmas Day, when the press accounts glowed with the "story" of Seth Lane's generosity! Bread and coffee for breakfast; soup, beans, and bread for dinner; stew and bread

for supper — thus unvaryingly did Sheriff Lane feed Mahoos County prisoners.

The sheriff was a jury packer. The little octagonal box containing the tin tubes in which were the names, could tell many a tale were it gifted with utterance. Stacking a jury was simplicity itself in Lane's hands. The preliminary trickery would be done in private; first he would remove the tin caps of the tubes containing the names of the jurors whom he desired drawn. He would place the tin caps in his pocket, and return the twelve uncapped tin tubes into the box to repose with the forty-eight capped tubes: twelve selected sheep among the forty-eight goats. When the time came for the drawing of the jurors in open court, the sheriff would lock the box and spin it with a brave show of fairness. After he had unlocked the box and thrust his hand into the aperture, his fingers would *feel* the twelve uncapped tubes — the desired jurors — and he would draw them out one by one under the very nose of judge and lawyers. Thus Lane's nimble fingers defeated justice time and again,— nullified the efforts of counsel, and the stern directions of the court. His services were frequently obtained by a railroad company much embroiled in damage suits, and by three or four lawyers of his own political party.

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THE SHERIFF'S METHODS 95

The office of the sheriff adjoined the wide corridor which traversed the Court House from end to end. At a wide flat desk sat a puny man in black, scratching away diligently with a noisy pen. This was William Hoge, under-sheriff, who derived twenty-five dollars a week for doing substantially all of the work of the office. Hoge was by profession a lawyer. Though he knew the law, he had never been able to impress the fact upon many persons. Consequently he had been for years a legal hack, digging case precedents for members of the bar, and doing petty scrivenering that was paid for by the running foot. Hoge had odd talents — he could build up a law brief of apparently undemolishable strength, and then, if needs be, he could pulverize it with another brief of opposite legal points. Prosperous lawyers hired him at mere clerk's wages to load their court guns for them. It was even said that Hoge had been slipped into judges' chambers to help in the preparation of decisions.

Hoge had a timid look and a hesitating, inconsequential manner, which had stood in the way of his rising as a practitioner. But as a consultant, as a grubber among tomes of calf, as an office drudge, William Hoge was gold coin to hand. Hoge flawlessly handled Sheriff Lane's business. He also suppressed the bold officiousness of constables. He

hated constables and he was always dealing with constables. Constables knew law like Supreme Court justices; they were born sleuths; they paraded malefactors through the busiest streets instead of following straight lines to the lock-up; they had the habit of examining each other's revolvers at Mr. Hoge's elbow. The sheriff's office was a nest of constables — tobacco-chewing, illiterate, pompous men whom a plated badge had made superior to other individuals.

Sheriff Lane displayed a fondness for the society of these uncouth myrmidons. He swapped cutplug with them, clapped them on the shoulder-blades, and led uproariously in banter. Mr. Hoge winced during this noise and crude fun. Citizens coming into the office often found Seth Lane rolling in mirth in the midst of a group of his men. "A jolly man, Seth Lane; rough but jolly," was the public verdict. In Seth's rough manners and ignorance the populace descried the virtues of simple honesty, of bluntness that sprang from a whole-souled nature.

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Seth Lane was ushering a citizen out of the office. The efficient Hoge had ministered to the caller's business, and now the latter was in the ceremonious hands of the sheriff.

"Good day, Cyruss. Call ag'in," said Sheriff

THE SHERIFF'S METHODS 97

Lane, shaking the man's hand as though he never expected to see him again on earth.

"Thanks, Seth."

The sheriff walked with the man to the corridor.

"Cyruss Hemingway, ain't it?" questioned Constable Eb Linton from his seat of indolence at the window.

"Course 'tis. You 'member he served on the June term, year 'fore last," responded Constable Sam Fitch, who was curled up on a low table in a contented sprawl. "Thet's the term what there was s' many 'trocious 'sault and batters —'member? This here Cyruss Hemingway set on the jury in the case of the State versus Louis Cannon, and didn't he vote acquittal when Jedge Smalley 'spressly charged that if, on the night in question, it were believed by the jury that Louis Cannon had partook of liquor for to sorter nerve him —"

"Jedge charged no sich thing 'tall," interrupted Constable Daniel Crowell, with a squirt of tobacco juice which landed unerringly at a distant cuspidor. "I was a-settin' not four feet away from Jedge Smalley, same as you are Jedge Smalley *there*, and I'm me *here* — jist like that. He used no sich words as you give. He said, 'If in the pursooance of a plan, the defendant gits intoxicated a-purpose for to commit —"

"Shet up, Dan. You're quotin' from the Harris case," objected Constable Fitch.

"Shet up yerself; I ain't."

"Less noise, gentlemen — please," begged Mr. Hoge.

"What now, boys?" queried Sheriff Lane, joining the fray.

"Say, Sh'eff, didn' Jedge Smalley say in the Louis Cannon case —"

"Jedge Smalley didn't set in the Cannon case. He was sick. Jedge Cox set —'member?" decided the sheriff.

"By Gar, thet's right," said Constable Fitch.

After several minutes of reflective tobacco-chewing, Constable Eb Linton hauled his handcuffs out of a side pocket.

"Lemme try my irons onto your wrist?" he asked Constable Crowell.

"What fer? Ain't you learnt yit how to manage 'em?"

"Cert'n'y. I on'y wanted to see if they needed ile. I'm goin' fer a pris'ner to-night. Sh'eff knows. Hey, Sh'eff?"

"Yes. Fairly emportant — breakin', enterin', malicious mischief," explained the sheriff.

"Oh! I know," said Constable Crowell. "Why, it's Sylvester Gibbons fer gittin' into the railroad shanty. He's on'y fourteen year ole. You don't

THE SHERIFF'S METHODS 99

need handcuffs to fetch him — you want a perambulator.”

“He’s sixteen year ole — and bad,” insisted Eb.

“I kin swear in a posse if you need it, Eb,” remarked the sheriff, following which sally there was a pandemonium of splutterings and chokings and back-poundings as the constables of Mahoos County enjoyed the discomfiture of Eb Linton.

A tall thin young man entered the office. His eyes were very dark and sagacious. A glance — and he had you. His wiry, straight hair contained a touch of gray. There was an eye-puffiness and a pallor that denoted absence of play hours. Ralph Brewster’s thirty-three years looked forty-odd. Brewster’s gauntness was steel-fibered; it not only masked his strength but belied it.

Sheriff Lane became singularly obsequious when he beheld Brewster. The brood of cackling constables also became singularly attentive. The mark of fame rested upon Brewster. He was the editor of the *Galeville Star*, the embodiment of prosperous journalism, the antithesis of the seedy *Eagle*. When the *Star* spoke, it expressed finality in Galeville. The *Star’s* enemies were wretches among men, its friends were laurelled heroes. The Galeville public measured the importance of a man according to the news and editorial columns of the

100 THE MAN WHO WON

Star. The questions of unworthiness or virtue were matters left to the whim of Ralph Brewster's pen.

The *Star* had a habit of singling out the moral giants for the rare honors of newspaper puffery, consequently the *Star* office was the rendezvous of earnest, loud-speaking protagonists of human welfare who bedeviled reporters with the woes of mankind. Occasionally one of these town saints went wrong (some one else's funds — or wife), and in such case the *Star* would remain silent, permitting the exclusive publication of the painful details to the disreputable *Eagle*. . . . The *Star* thrived on righteousness.

Sheriff Lane held his private-office door wide open for the stately entrance of Mr. Brewster. The sheriff seated the visitor with a show of Lane's urbanity. Then he clicked the door against the talkative constables.

"Well, well, Mr. Brewster! Here y'are at last. I thought mebbe you was never goin' to give me a call. I says to myself, 'If that there young Ralph Brewster, what everybuddy is a-praisin', ain't a mind to pay a visit to the sheriff of this county 'fore he quits office, why, sir, I'll have the law onto him.' Lo and behold, in you walk and save court costs."

Seth Lane's facetiousness carried with it the sly flattery which many a citizen of Mahoos County had interpreted as sincerity.

THE SHERIFF'S METHODS 101

"I meant to come, but you know —"

"I 'preciate the tasks of your work, Mr. Brewster. Runnin' a newspaper ain't drivin' a cow into a medder lot. The *Star* shows what your ef-forts kin do. The *Eagle* — say, I wouldn't put an ad into that there *Eagle* less'n I had to by requirements of law."

"Don't say that, sheriff. Mr. Woods has been unfortunate, Heaven knows. I wish he would do better, even if he is my competitor. A large family —"

Mr. Brewster stopped short; his sympathetic meaning was complete. The sheriff was a little abashed.

"Oh, Woods ain't a bad customer; jist shiftless," he remarked, thus lightly appraising the industry of Albert C. Woods. "Boss Harrison's son is his partner, I understand. Pair queer yoke-fellers."

"Strikingly different, it must be said. I hope they'll do well," said Mr. Brewster.

Sheriff Lane turned an incredulous eye upon his caller. But Mr. Brewster's wide philanthropic mouth was set candidly. The sheriff was puzzled; he could not comprehend magnanimity.

"I hope they do well — too," Seth Lane added, certain now that this was the correct note.

"There is a field here for the *Eagle*," resumed

102 THE MAN WHO WON

Brewster. "I should regret to see the *Eagle* discontinued. One must not be actuated by envy in business competition."

Lane wondered what there was about the Galeville *Eagle* that the *Star* might envy.

"While you're here, Mr. Brewster, I want to speak to you along certain lines I've been considerin' lately. This here is confidential 'tween friends, o' course." Seth Lane's voice dropped to an intimate whisper as he leaned toward the editor. "Now then, I've been thinkin' of my po-litical career, and some facts has struck me forcible, as you might say. Three times my feller citizens have chosen me to places of trust and respons'bility. Enterin' the arena of politics at the early age of twenty-two,"—he was quoting Galeville's leading newspaper—"I have successively filled the positions of coroner, county c'missioner and high sheriff. It wasn't education put me here for I ain't got any. 'Twasn't money, fer I'm a poor man—lit'rally. What put me here? Nuthin' more nor less than the desire of the citizens that I should be here—popularity you may as well call it."

"There is no doubt of it," agreed Mr. Brewster.

"Well, then, popularity—let it stand. Next year my term as sheriff will end. Am I to retire to private life when the citizens are demandin' fer me to stay in harness? Am I to give up servin' the

THE SHERIFF'S METHODS 103

public after years of bein' faithful to the public? I shouldn't think so. Therefore, I feel it my duty to respond to this demand —"

"The State Senate, sheriff?"

"No, 'tis not. It's Congress."

"Congress? Why, Stafford Moore —"

"Stafford Moore told me hisself the last time he came from Washin'ton that he wasn't goin' to run ag'in. The field's clear and I think I am the man fer to repersent this congressional district at the naytional capital. What I would like to have is the backin' of the *Galeville Star*. A candidate oughter have the support of his leadin' home paper, 'cause there'll be candidates from other towns in the district."

Brewster, the man of platitudes, became instantly Brewster the man of caution, of executive action. Here was a fact confronting him — Seth Lane's ambition and Lane a famed vote rustler! Brewster deliberated while lighting a cigar. Could the sheriff win?

"Sheriff," he said, with a noticeable stiffening in manner, "the *Star* never commits itself to particular candidates early in the race. Furthermore, Mr. Siddons, my partner in the *Star*, must be consulted. Personally, I am not unfavorable to you. I have no candidate. Later on I'll take the matter up with Siddons. For the sake of the party, I'm for the

104 THE MAN WHO WON

strongest man, and if you're the strongest man we'll back you."

"Mr. Brewster, I'd rather have your personal support than even the backin' of the *Galeville Star*. I know how *you* stand in this community."

Mr. Brewster nodded. His young-old wisdom capitulated to the honeyed words of the bumpkin sheriff.

CHAPTER IX

A REVOLT IN THE FAMILY

THE spindling legs of little Mamie Steuben were outlined in the doorway of Sheriff Lane's office. Mamie wore the coat of a larger sister and the shoes of a smaller brother. Her face was dirty and her eyes were streaked from a crying spell, the forerunner of her appearance in the office of the high sheriff. Mamie had revolted against coming. And now she was here in all her sorrow. She was frightened. There could be nothing affirmatively agreeable said about Mamie except that she had a soul.

"Don't stand in the doorway, little girl," said Mr. Hoge, blinking at her over his spectacles. "Come in, come in."

She walked timidly to his desk.

"Well, little girl, I suppose you want to get a permit to go down into the jail. Eh?" said Mr. Hoge, endeavoring to perk his features into a paternal smile, but failing dismally.

"Yes, sir. I want to see my father."

"What's your father's name — dear?"

"Char-ruls Steuben."

Hoge took down an index case. "Hm! Charles Steuben. Let me see," he droned to himself. "Ess. Steuben — Steuben. Here it is. Charles Steuben. Larceny. Six months county jail. That your pop?"

"Yes, sir," said Mamie, with a flush of shame.

"He's one of my arrests," boasted Constable Eb Linton. "I ketched him hidin' behind the brick stable in the ole tan-yard. It seems as if deper-dations was bein' committed for some time past out toward Sparrer Lane. The township 'ficials couldn't seem to lay hold of no clew. So I was put on the case and 'fore a week was up I had fastened the guilt of stealin' two hoss blankets onto this here little girl's pop — what's his name? — Charles Stibbins."

Mamie began to cry. Hoge shot an angry glance at Eb Linton. The child's hysterical sobs were falling faster and faster upon Hoge's sensitive ear.

"Mr. Linton, I shall have to ask you to refrain from discussing aloud the affairs of the patrons of this office," said Mr. Hoge in his thin, legal voice.

"Patrons? Whereabouts at?" queried Eb Linton, looking at little Mamie Steuben with an expression as though she were not discernible to the eye.

"This child is as much a patron of this office as any lawyer who pays us fees. The sheriff's office

A REVOLT IN THE FAMILY 107

is for the use of the public — man, woman, and child — and it is *not* a clubhouse for constables." Hoge's little voice was creaking defiantly.

"Try to drive us constables out'n here and then see *what*," challenged Linton. "It's been tried afore and failed. I guess I'll notify the sh'eff 'bout this."

Linton figured that should the issue come to a head, the county constables with their numerous kin and henchmen would bulk bigger than the dried-up bachelor of a Hoge, who lived in one room and had not as much as a crony in the world. Constables were men of the town. Where Hoge knew one man, a constable was hail-fellow to dozens. This was Eb Linton's view.

"All right, you tell the sheriff," cried Mr. Hoge, "and then I'll find out from the judge of the court whether you court officers are paid to make little children cry."

Eb Linton had a dread of being criticized by the bench. His whole life pivoted upon his anxiety to maintain a felicitous official relation with the stern, robed gentleman from whom, he was quite sure, the sum of wisdom flowed. Therefore Hoge's counter-threat was disquieting. Linton cut a sliver of tobacco and masticated it viciously. Within five minutes he decided that the orders of Mr. Hoge were to be obeyed in the circumstances.

108 THE MAN WHO WON

Mamie departed for the office with a ticket in her hand. Her limbs were atremble from the disturbance she had precipitated; a disturbance involving sheriffs and judges — caused by her crying. Her mother had warned her particularly not to cry. Mamie was in a frightened daze. She wandered up and down the corridors looking hither and thither for the stairway which the little man with the crackling voice, told her would lead to the jail. She saw only a jumble of hallways and doors. She stopped before one of these doors and knocked faintly.

"Come in," said a voice that Mamie considered the most soothing sound she had heard since setting foot in the Mahoos County Court House.

Mamie opened the door and stood in a big shadowy room. She beheld a piano and many chairs, and long windows with iron bars. And there was a beautiful young lady, sitting alone drinking tea at one of the windows.

"Is this the jail?" asked Mamie.

"Not exactly," laughed the young lady. "You are visiting some one in the jail?"

"Yessum. My father — Char-ruls Steuben."

"Oh! That so? Won't you have some tea first? Then I'll take you down."

"Yessum, I'll have tea."

The young lady brought a chair, and then handed the child a teacup and saucer. The young lady saw

A REVOLT IN THE FAMILY 109

Mamie lay a grimy hand upon the snowy cover of the chair. The young lady smiled. Mamie drank abashedly.

"Has your father been down below long?"

"'Bout a month. . . . He's sick. . . . He don't get e-nough to eat. . . . I've brought some sandwiches. They're starving him, Ma says."

Alice Lane reddened. She again filled the child's cup and plied her with small cakes.

"Do you know the man they call the sheriff?" Alice asked, testing Mamie to ascertain whether the child comprehended the connection between the prisoner's illness and Seth Lane's selfishness.

"No'm."

"Do you know what the sheriff is? — what he is supposed to do?"

"No'm."

The child shook her head. To Mamie, there was no link between Alice Lane's father and Charles Steuben's plight.

"When you go home, you may tell your mother that your papa sha'n't starve any longer."

"Why isn't he to starve any longer, ma'am?"

"Well — you see, my father has a great deal to do with your father."

"Oh, I see — your father works here, and you live here," said Mamie, her face brightening.

"Now I see. I'll tell Ma."

110 THE MAN WHO WON

A few minutes later Alice Lane was leading the child down a flight of iron steps which ended at a steel door. A jailer swung the door open with a dull clang. They stepped into the granite pit of imprisonment. The odor of the last jail meal pervaded the place. Alice saw that her little companion was in terror; she took the child's hand into her own as if it had been a pearl.

"You musn't let your father see that you've been crying."

Mamie glanced at the cells on either side. Most of the prisoners were minor malefactors whose sentences of imprisonment were not more than six months. A longer sentence meant incarceration in the state prison. There were about forty-five prisoners, and of these fully one-third were tramps, for the apprehension of whom freight cars and tow-paths were being rigorously combed at all times by Sheriff Lane's deputies, not for the high aim of stamping out vagrancy, but to multiply fees for the sheriff.

The remainder of the prisoners consisted of crooks being held for trial, a sprinkling of women offenders and some wretches from the police court.

The jailer conducted Alice and the child to a cell door where no eager face was agape at the bars.

"Here he is," said the jailer.

A REVOLT IN THE FAMILY 111

The cell was semi-dark; on a cot in the corner they made out the figure of a man.

"Pop. . . . It's me — Mamie!"

The man raised his head.

"Hello, Mamie!" The hollow voice betokened tuberculosis. As the cell door opened, the man endeavored to rise to greet the child. He took one step and fell a huddled mass upon the floor. The jailer assisted the man back to the cot. Charles Steuben's lips parted, and his teeth appeared to the gums. His eyes were glassy. He was a physical wreck.

"*What's goin' on here?*"

It was Sheriff Lane's voice. It was not, however, his office voice, the voice known to the voters of Mahoos County. It was his down-jail voice, the unadorned voice of the real Seth Lane.

"Alice! . . . What are you doing here?"

"It's high time *somebody* came down," Alice said.

"He's sick, ain't he?" was Lane's comment.

"Yes, and I'm going to send for a doctor," replied Alice.

"Git Doc Wynans, the county physician."

"Dr. Wynans has had this man in charge for some time. He's a political doctor. I want him treated medically. I'm going to send for Dr. Lamp-ton."

She walked briskly to the jail office. Her father followed.

"Lampton'll charge you two dollars. Doc Wynans comes fer nuthin'."

"Wynans comes for nothing and does nothing," she retorted. "I'll pay the two dollars."—Alice Lane picked up the telephone receiver—"Central, give me 21 Main."

"What are you concernin' yourself 'bout these matters fer? Am I a-gorn to have trouble with my own family, let alone outsiders?"

Alice Lane was the marrow of the sheriff's happiness. She was the one individual who could soften his roughness into tender indulgence. But for his liberality to her, he would have been a miser *in toto*. Her whims enslaved his purse, his time, his independence of mind and his latitude of action. From babyhood her pout had been his law.

To-day Alice's mood was snappish. He always feared his daughter when she was belligerent. In his battles with men he had never known such a fear. It was a potential apprehension of the mightiest blow that could be struck him: the loss of her affection.

"So this is the way *we* conduct the jail for the people of Mahoos County," said Alice. "I suppose if we starved Steuben to death within the next few weeks we could earn all of six dollars."

A REVOLT IN THE FAMILY 113

The sheriff's eyes blinked nervously.

"I ain't been starvin' Steuben," he said. "He is brought in here with his system run down with drink, and jist 'cause he goes to pieces I'm to be held responsible, eh? That's the way with womenfolks — reasonin' from out of their hearts instead of their skulls. I s'pose if I served dainty lunchings of oyster patties and peas, and 'stablished a diet kitchen for drunks and give these here prisoners return checks so's they could spend pleasant arfternoons outdoors 'mongst the unconvicted, then Seth Lane would be a model sheriff fer to have ladies' clubs a-praisin' his humanity. No, I sha'n't be a paper-napkin kind of a sheriff. I do my sworn duty; I give pris'ners good substantial meals, and tend to their health accordin' to common sense. They'll have to wait until they git out of here if they want frills of eatin' and two-dollar doctors. Our citizens didn't build this jail fer to reward the just."

"This is a plain case of starvation — argue as you will."

"So I'm to have an undutiful darter, am I? You'd disgrace me?"

"Steuben's death would disgrace you. I'm trying to save you from that."

"Dr. Lampton is no friend of mine. Why'd you send for him?"

114 THE MAN WHO WON

"I was thinking of poor Steuben at the time — nothing else, I admit."

"You a'mit. But where do I come in? — your father?"

The generous impulses of the daughter arose to the appeal of the father's perfidy.

"Why can't you do better here, father? There is so much that could be done to help these miserable men and women. Won't you try — please?"

"Try? Certainly. What way do you mean?"

"Their food — give them vegetables. Give them meat once a day — meat to cut with a knife, not to spoon up in soup."

"I'll give them pertaters; meat is too high."

"But you are allowed enough money by the county to give them meat," she insisted.

"Course I am. And then you'd have me donate my few pennies profit to start a res'rint fer tramps that have never eat nuthin' better'n broken vittles."

"It isn't your money to put into your pocket."

Sheriff Lane sprang back to his guns.

"Listen here," he said with a touch of anger in his voice. "Every sheriff in the past has shaved this county 'lowance for food. Am I to be the fust one not to do it? The taxpayers don't expect an official to be too confounded honest. It 'ud be suspicious. I don't purtend to be a model sheriff. I purtend to be jist a sheriff, no better nor worse than

A REVOLT IN THE FAMILY 115

Mahoos County's been electin' this past forty year. And what am I doin' this connivin' and schemin' fer? Why, to make you comf'able some day. You are the only one my mind is on day and night. If you hadn't been born to me, I'd been contented to stay farmhand down to Brayton at ten dollars a month. But when you came — born in your grand-dad's home right here in Galeville — all the money in the whole state wasn't enough for me. I quit bein' farmhand and came here. You made me coroner, you made me county c'missioner, you made me sheriff, and now you're a-gorn to make me reper-sentative in Washin'ton of the Second Congressional District of this state."

"Congress?" she gasped.

"Yes, miss, I'm the next Congressman, and you're to go to Washin'ton to live in a hotel or mebbe a toney apartment — and it takes money. Washin'-ton! Jist think, girl, what that'll mean to you. It's what I've been raisin' you fer. Don't I know you're a finished product of a girl — handsome, smart, devilish sassy, and touchy as a filly. I'm glad you ain't cowish like some girls; that you've got mettle, and ain't so awful lady-like and wishy-washy, nor —." He drew her little frame within his thick arms and kissed her. "You sauce-box! Ain't you 'shamed of yourself? Worry your old pop that's goin' to take you to Washin'ton, will you? To

116 THE MAN WHO WON

Washin'ton where a fine set-up girl like you kin git what she wants in the way of a husband. Come now, ain't you goin' to send away Dr. Lampton when he arrives?"

"No. I don't care a snap of my finger about going to Washington."

Then she walked to the jail office to wait for Dr. Lampton.

CHAPTER X

AT THE MILL STREAM

JACK HARRISON was spinning from Telford City to Galeville in his roadster. His weekly editorials lay folded within his coat. A few minutes more and he would be deep in work amidst the dust-heaps of the *Eagle* office. For the past few weeks he had found no time to waste at the Washington Club. The rosewood and crystal cafés of town vogue had known him not. His cronies of the siphon and the midnight song were considering removing his name from the rosters of goodfellowship. Days and nights of dim regularity were beginning to show upon Jack Harrison, beginning to bring out the man in him.

With the heat of the April sun upon his face, and the smell of freshening fields in his nostrils, Harrison lapsed into a reverie, a half-stupor. The swaying of the car, the even chug of the motor, the song of the wind about his ears made him drowsy. His energies slumbered. Only his eyes were awake.

On the outskirts of Galeville was Filberts Mill,

118 THE MAN WHO WON

a picnic ground. Harrison bethought himself of a famous spring among the rocks. An honest thirst commanded him to seek out his nook. He clambered out of the car and sauntered through the gates. The desolation of winter still clung to the place. Not a soul was within sight. The dance pavilion, swarming in July with the heedless youth of Galeville, was boarded up. Refreshment booths were similarly encased. Rifle ranges had sunk into decrepitude, and the winter's storms had written a tale of havoc upon the pine sides of the merry-ground house. Pavilions, booths, and stands were mere skeletons of pleasures gone. The litter of the last picnic party still fluttered about. The ground was dank in the thick of the trees—the shaded places of summer lollings and gaieties. Now it was a dreary, forlorn region.

But the mill wheel was alive with its measured turn and splashing in the sun-lit watercourse. Harrison descended the bank, and leaped upon little island mounds, comely with marsh-marigolds. He followed a narrow path of boards upstream to a group of massive rocks already tricked out with the white flowers of the bloodroot and the saxifrage. Trailing arbutus was near by, and the spice of its flowers was in the air. Here the trees were thickly clustered; few sunbeams penetrated into that valley. Approaching, Harrison made out the drinking pool,



“ALICE LANE ON TOP OF A BOWLDER”



and then the trickle of the tiny rivulet down the rock, and then — higher up — Alice Lane on top of a boulder, nibbling crinkleroot.

"Oh!" she cried. "Mr. Harrison!"

"How d' do," he ventured.

"Of all meetings —" she said.

"I didn't follow you here, Miss Lane."

"Of course you didn't. I came this morning with my lunch. Won't you help me off this rock?" Her slender ankles had been showing rather prominently against the gray stone, and she had been making frantic tugs at her skirt ever since his appearance. She gave her two hands into his and leaped down.

Nothing could have been more disconcerting to Harrison than the touch of her hands. He trembled.

"I came to get a drink," Harrison declared, standing stiffly upright, and feeling that he was anything but impressive.

"May I get you one?" she said. Already she had taken the tin dipper to do him the service. He took the handle from her, and placed the tin to his lips. He drank a mouthful, and then became aware that he was gulping horribly.

"Fine spring day," he remarked. He cast the water away.

"Yes. You weren't so thirsty."

120 THE MAN WHO WON

"No, I suppose not. The thought of the spring — you know."

"Yes. . . . Well, I must be going."

"Won't you ride back with me?"

"No, thank you. It's only a short mile — and I love to walk."

"Sorry I have the car with me. . . . I love to walk . . . too."

Alice Lane did not reply. To him the words sounded flat. Being in a very deep woods with a girl almost a stranger to him, and one whose good opinion he had set golden value upon, Harrison decided that this was no time for attempted light galantries. Anyhow, he was a failure with small talk under her paralyzing gaze. It seemed that whenever he undertook to make headway he floundered lamentably. Where was his lightsome banter that pleased other girls? Harrison pondered. . . . It was because he cared for her greatly, and yet had never been upon a footing of friendly ease with her, that his naturalness suffered rout in her presence. Here she was, at his side, treading the soft carpet of dead leaves with companionable strides. Yet, withal, she seemed far off, unattainable. And what a divine creature she was! All day in the air had rosily tinted her face. The pressure of a high collar accentuated the soft plumpness of chin and cheek. She wore a cloth suit of rather mannish

AT THE MILL STREAM 121

cut, with a boutonniere of liverwort blossoms in the lapel. In her hand she carried the badge of spring — a cushiony mass of yellow adder's-tongue, blue cohosh, and bladder-fern — April's gift to the seeker of blooms.

"Wasn't it odd the way we met here to-day?" she said, as if unaware of his frozen feelings. "Now if I hadn't known you, wouldn't it have been a *situation* when you caught me upon the rock?"

"Yes. . . . Would you have spoken?"

"Certainly. *Who* would have introduced us? Indeed, it might have been the forming of a very pleasant acquaintance."

"Better than an introduction in a drug store," he suggested, pluming himself that this was quite a retort. "Our acquaintance—" He stopped. The words were not fitting, he thought. He finished with the mild commonplace: "The woods are wonderful."

"I suppose you view it as eccentric for me to spend a day here," she said pleasantly. "People — good people and bad — bore me sometimes, — then I run away to the woods. It makes a long day out here — listening to the spooky noises of this woods. When I get back to people again, I love to hear voices, no matter whose."

"Even mine."

122 THE MAN WHO WON

"Yes, even yours, Mr. Harrison," she laughed.

"I won't take that as a compliment."

"No, don't. I never give compliments."

"You are a puzzle, Miss Lane."

"Have I puzzled you?"

"Well . . . I can't say. You are different . . . unlike any girl I ever knew, if you'll pardon me."

"Then I must be an oddity: you know so many girls."

It was an unexpected sally fraught with the mischief she had planned. Glee over the impish act danced in her eyes. Harrison held his breath.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"Oh, the gossip of girls — it leaps oceans."

"Whom do you know in Telford City?" he quizzed.

"A regiment of people — Eva Wilcox — but she didn't tell me."

"I like Eva," he blurted.

"So do I."

"Thank Heaven, at last we are agreed upon something!"

"Are we so dreadfully at loggerheads? I don't think so, Mr. Harrison."

"Then let me call —"

"You may call . . . sometime . . . of course."

"But when?"

Alice Lane smiled with enigmatic reserve. She

AT THE MILL STREAM 128

was not the kind to be stormed into assenting to Harrison's desires. His Telford City character was known to her. He was a terrific Lothario, a clubman. He was undeniably polite, but she had marked in him a forwardness quite at variance with the suitors of Galeville. Nothing was plainer than that Harrison needed to be "taken down." Some young men become emboldened from success with —. She flushed. Her independent spirit fired. In no circumstances would she permit herself to be another conquest on his string of captures.

They had reached the gates of the park. Harrison read the signs of her imminent departure.

"When?" he repeated, with a smile that hid nothing of his concern over her reply.

"I'll invite you — some time. No hurry, is there, Mr. Harrison?" she answered in her cheeriest manner.

"Oh, no; not in the least." He laughed, and took her polite farewell with masked chagrin. Then he strutted to his car, growling maledictions upon his inane, blundering self.

CHAPTER XI

SHE CHOOSES TO RELENT

ONE day, threading his way through a noonday crowd on Cuyler Street, Telford City, Jack Harrison was suddenly rammed by the friendly elbow of Eva Wilcox. Eva's elbow carried weight and force convincingly.

Harrison turned his steps her way.

"You're the very man I'm looking for," she said, as they swung along together. "I want you at my house Thursday evening — a little cards, if you care; or dancing on the side veranda."

"Thank you, I'll come. What's the excitement?"

"A Miss Lane of Galeville — sheriff's daughter. We attended Miss Freeman's school together. She's to spend the day with me."

"I know her. You see, I'm in business in Galeville now."

"So I've heard. Well, what do you think of Miss Lane?"

"She's all right, I guess," he answered, hedging his feelings with a tepid tone.

SHE CHOOSES TO RELENT 125

"Well — as long as you know her, you two shall be partners at bridge."

"Not for the world, Eva," he blurted. "She might think that I had arranged it so."

"Oh, no. For that matter, I'll tell her it was my doing."

"No . . . it won't do. Anyhow, I don't care for cards."

Eva detected a peculiar something in Harrison's voice, but she did not press upon the mystery.

"Bring Doris Edwards, won't you?" she asked.

"Doris?"

"Or some one else —"

"No, no. . . . I'll bring Doris."

When they parted, Eva gave thought to the unaccountable queerness that had entered into the humor of John Harrison since last she had met that young gentleman.

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Miss Lane in evening attire, with extra twists and rolls to her hair, was the most wonderful girl in the world. So thought Jack Harrison. Still Doris Edwards, whom he had called for with resentful musings, was nowise overshadowed. He was rather proud of Doris, especially since he had observed Alice Lane compliment her with glances of competitive interest. Of beauties present, there was none to be aligned with Alice Lane and Doris

Edwards to-night. Between them, it was a mere choice of the whimsical eye.

Harrison for the once permitted of Doris' little attentions; he not only accepted them but encouraged them, since these attentions would prove to Miss Lane that he was not a nonentity with maidens of the stripe of Miss Doris. It could not but be noticed by Miss Lane and every one that Doris' eyes and ears were taken up entirely with this young man. She was radiant.

"I am so happy to-night," she said to him as they withdrew to the library. "To think that you asked me here . . . when there were *so many others* you could have asked. . . . It shows—"

"Well?" he demanded,—a reproof and a warning. Doris became silent.

Harrison was not so soft-spoken to her now as when they were the target of the wondering stare of Alice Lane. He was surprised at his own ruthlessness in playing Doris for a puppet. He did not remember ever doing such a thing before. A game for lasslorn schoolboys. A cad's game to be sure. Yet he would do it again—and again—to wipe out the mark of his two defeats at Alice Lane's hands. Yet he thanked his good fortune that it had been his lot to bring no one less pretty, less notable in their circle of friends than Doris.

He was spared further attentions on the part of

SHE CHOOSES TO RELENT 127

Doris by the entrance of Muriel Clayton and Jason Storridge.

"What — again? This is getting to be quite an *affair*," remarked Storridge. "Seems you two are always together."

Doris crimsoned; Harrison boiled. Harrison promised himself some day to get Storridge into an open field and make his little hide pay the debt of these annoyances.

"We've just been introduced to Miss Lane," prattled Muriel, tucking some loose hair strands into captivity. "We found her most delightfully sweet, though we spoke only a few words together. She has so much poise and good looks—don't you think?"

Doris assented quite freely.

"I have asked several people if she had a particular young man,"—Harrison's back straightened,— "and it seems she has. He's coming later. Business chap, probably."

The evening was over for Harrison! He sat mute and still. Doris—Muriel—Jason—seemed far distant. Nothing seemed real or present but the thudding of a great incessant blow. . . . He dimly heard Eva Wilcox's voice summoning them to cards. He rose dazedly, and followed Doris into a big room. One by one the bobbing bodies leveled; all were seated now except Alice Lane.

128 THE MAN WHO WON

She was standing, expectantly facing a door. In a moment more she was welcoming a very important looking young man. Miss Lane was presenting him to her near neighbors. This flurry over, they sat down — partners.

"I guess we may as well deal," said Jack Harrison with a voice that sounded as though it came from a tomb.

His evening being over and hope dead, Harrison had thrown off the first shock of the tragic stroke and had lapsed into the grimness with which a man of mettle accepts defeat. Gradually he had so steeled his spirit that he could glance at Alice Lane, or her fortunate companion. His pangs grew less and less as the evening wore on. Alice Lane, from a divinity, had become a damsel. Once she had smiled upon him from the other side of the room, and he had tabulated it as unimportant. Not even a quaver was born of the circumstance. Why should she stir him now? She was disposed of — the fortunate young stranger's prize. He could face her now without flinching. Where was her power that had made him a tongue-tied bungler? No, his evening was not quite over. He was just beginning to taste pleasure.

Cards gave way to dancing within the glassed porch at the side of the house — to sprightly disc

SHE CHOOSES TO RELENT 129

tunes. Harrison led out Doris. Then he gave her over to other suitors. For these she was a magnet. Harrison wondered why she had never enchanted him. Some very serious, worthy fellows had made known to him their despair. Strange, how unhampered and relieved he felt when Doris was receiving the attentions of other men.

By and by Harrison drifted to Eva Wilcox, who had been too busy to dance. But she had loads of time to talk to *him*, she said.

"Doris is wonderful to-night," declared Eva.

"So is Miss Lane wonderful to-night," he said, priding himself upon his calm detachment from interest in the matter. "Who is her young man?"

"Sewell Bullard. His father owns oilcloth works in Galeville."

"Engaged?"

"Well —"

"They are. . . . I thought as much."

"I'm not so sure," she protested hastily. "Sewell is very attentive. . . . Ah! Here is Mr. Bullard now. You must meet him."

Harrison met Mr. Bullard.

Ten words from Mr. Bullard and Harrison had him set down as a needle-witted office man, an individual dry as dust. How the whimsical Alice was to attune herself to his prosy heaviness was a question. Harrison gave attention to Bullard's sim-

180 THE MAN WHO WON

plicity of thought, and then swelled within himself. Now he dared look boldly into Alice's disquieting eyes and still remain master of his ease.

Bullard said on a single pitched note: "When you play cards for a couple of hours it fatigues you, I think. . . . Most everybody here dances very well. I like to watch them. . . . We can make the trip back home in twenty-two minutes, 'Alice. I put on a new set of tires to-day. I noticed a magnolia tree in full bloom in Caleb Truesdale's yard. I'd thought April was a little too —"

"Oh, no," corrected Alice sweetly. "Er — Mr. Harrison, you have positively shunned me to-night. Not a pleasant word — not a dance —"

"I'll dance. Let us. . . ." Harrison was somewhat astonished. However he rated her chiding as an effort to make Sewell Bullard jealous. Then it occurred to him that he had adopted identical tactics. His own scourge was flagellating him.

An amiable, loquacious Alice went with him to the porch. When Harrison touched her hand, and when her face was upturned Harrison found difficulty in maintaining his balance. He gave her a quick, cool glance under which her cheeks grew ruby. His assessment of her was quick and calm, a faultless piece of femininity, but not his. Hence the end of his sighing of weeks.

"Mr. Harrison. . . . How reserved you are."

SHE CHOOSES TO RELENT 181

"Indeed. Might I be otherwise with you — and survive?"

"Tell me, do I so thoroughly chill you?"

"Chill? Oh, no. . . . But I feel I must be careful. Young ladies who prefer to walk a long mile rather than be toted home in a fellow's car —"

"Oh, I see — I should have accepted the motor ride."

"No, not *should*, Miss Lane. There was no compulsion. . . . Still, I am constrained to be careful."

"And reserved?"

"Yes, if you will have it so."

"Well, you needn't be." A pout and then a smile. "You mustn't mind me," — she went on — "because I'm unbearable some days."

"You have 'days,' eh?" he twitted. "Too bad I met you on one of your 'days.'"

"That's cruel, Mr. Harrison."

The music stopped. They were in the midst of the dancers resting for the encore. He did not strive to reply.

"I don't care to dance any more . . . really," she said.

"Very well. Shall I take you back to Mr. Bullard?"

"Not necessarily." The reply was puzzling; she did not wish to be handed over to Bullard, neither

132 THE MAN WHO WON

did she wish to dance. It couldn't possibly be that she desired to parley with him, John Harrison. Harrison dismissed the thought as absurd.

They were standing at an open doorway breathing in the mild air of the April night. The air was fragrant with piney odors. Alice wound a scarf round her shoulders. A magic disc spun its music once more. The veranda boards creaked with the movement of the dancers.

Harrison was studying the heavens.

"The dipper is—"

"I'm not going to talk stars, Mr. Harrison."

"It's immaterial." His choicest Arctic manner was behind the words.

"Of course—to you," she said somewhat warmly. "Because I've been rude you don't care to be even civil. Is that not so?"

"You haven't been rude, and I *do* care to be civil."

"That's better," she said, brightening. "Let's step outdoors?"

"Certainly."

A creature of coquetties, she was beginning to impress him. It was meet that he, the selected victim, should acquiesce in this byplay of her whim. Bullard was staring at them. They stepped down upon the path streaked with many lights. No other couples had dared the night air. Walking bare-

SHE CHOOSES TO RELENT 133

headed in the garden chill, indulging her caprice — a bit to her rein — Harrison's self-complacency wilted. They halted at a picket fence fronting the street. The neighborhood was placid with the peace of midnight. She turned and faced him.

"Now I do insist that I've mistreated you," she said in penitential accents. "I knew it all the time I was doing it. You were pert. I only wanted to teach you a lesson."

"And I've stayed repressed."

"You have. You're horrid."

"You'll take cold out here."

"Mr. Harrison — I haven't the least desire to go in."

"Miss Lane, let me predict something: Mr. Bullard and you are going to have a scene over this — or it will be that Mr. Bullard is to have the scene all to himself? Possibly that's it."

"Mr. Bullard is a splendid young man, but he has no authority over me."

"You surprise me. I thought —"

"No — no entanglements whatever," she answered. "I'm free to stay out here as long — as long as *you* can stand the cold."

"It's not cold — it hasn't been for the past three minutes. When you are like this, Miss Lane, it's summer."

"You can be nice, it seems."

184 THE MAN WHO WON

"Yes, and nicer if . . . Miss Lane, you said once that you'd tell me when I might call."

"I did . . . and I shall, too. Any time you wish Mr. Harrison."

"To-morrow night, then?"

"Certainly. . . . Let us go in now."

"I agree — but not on account of the colonel," said Lane."

CHAPTER XII

THE DOMESTIC MOTIF

THE official parlor of the Court House, a plush and French mirrored parlor of the 80's, took on its sole touch of present day life from the presence of Alice Lane. The other inmate of the room, Alice's mother, harked back to the 80's, with her black silk dress of state and the homely shoes of another day. When Mrs. Lane wore black silk, it betokened company. Alice's radiancy confirmed the inference.

"It's eight o'clock and after. What time did your young man say he'd be here?" questioned Mrs. Lane, as she brushed a few specks of dust from the piano with her handkerchief.

"He didn't say, mother."

"Ought to be here by now," Mrs. Lane said as she seated herself with formal preciseness upon the lounge. Then she folded her hands and waited.

At fifteen minutes to nine she surveyed the clock hands. The tardiness of the expected guest was unheard of. Neither was it respectable according to the Galeville standard of propriety.

186 THE MAN WHO WON

"See here, Alice — if your young man thinks —"

"He isn't my young man," Alice said haughtily. "I've just met him! He's never been here before."

"All the worse then for his —"

A gong in the room sounded. Alice went to a cabinet on the wall, and unhooked a formidable brass key — one of the many that opened sundry court house doors and cells and closets. She ushered in the visitor at the steel door which opened upon the side yard. Mrs. Lane rose to view the man who would call upon a blameless maiden at a quarter of nine. The man advanced smilingly and was presented. After vouchsafing him a stiff handshake and the keen look of suspicious motherhood, Mrs. Lane settled into a nearby chair. It was the Galeville way — sewing and chaperonage coupled. Thus were courtiers of daughters put under maternal watch and test. But Harrison was not intimidated by Mrs. Lane's presence.

"Here I am at last. Rather late."

"You were long getting here," Alice said.

"Yes — nearly a month, I believe, but I have you to blame for that."

The sally was fitting. Alice giggled. But Mrs. Lane's brow clouded. Though she was keeping her voice religiously out of the conversation, her ears were religiously in it. . . . Finally she put

THE DOMESTIC MOTIF 187

down Harrison's remark as an urban flippancy that ought to be expected from quarter-of-nine young men, and went on with her needle.

After this first sally, which was in the nature of ice-breaking, Harrison toned down his conversation to topics suited to the place and moment. A fleeting hour found him and his vis-à-vis drawing closer to a better understanding. Formality melted and small confidences rippled forth. The trivialities of existence grew into exalted concerns under this enchanting discussion. Harrison was beginning to know her as a definite being instead of the airy goddess of his fancy. She revealed herself prettily. She golfed; she adored Dickens and could quote the funniments of Bardell versus Pickwick; she detested politics as a wrangle between professionals (papa included, of course); she had her views on the suffrage (but why spoil a pleasant evening by disclosing them?) mauve as a color, chocolate as a confection, flat heels, Wagner in music and Atlantic City at Easter, etc., etc.

"And your strong dislikes, Miss Lane, are what?"

"Well — you've improved greatly over that day in the woods."

Mrs. Lane sniffed dubiously at this remark. Alas! These brilliancies of the young folk were beyond her day and understanding.

188 THE MAN WHO WON

About ten o'clock as habit could make it, Sheriff Seth Lane came in from his nightly peregrinations among the voters of Galeville. A custom as hallowed with him as ritual. Shaking hands along the curbstones, whisperings in cigar stores, an occasional stealthy drink at the Union House bar, a sly searching out of Greek and Italian and Slavish settlers to give them the honor of a "howdy-do"—these tactics were termed "vote-nourishers" by the sheriff. In this manner was Lane brought into friendly association with the voters, whom he deemed the pegs of his ambition. Lane had risen from farm chore-man to sheriff by incessant talking. To the average listener this propensity proved that, first, Lane was a sociable body; second, that he was frank-spoken, hence honest; and, third, that no man's degree was too humble to receive respectful notice from him. . . . A wily, reckoning fellow, Lane.

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"Yes, Mr. Harrison, your father and me are in the same line, but not in the same party. But we have never con-flicted—no reason to. Mahoos County gives me what I want, and Keaslake County gives him what he wants, and along the gen'rul princ'ples of party organ-i-zation, him and me is one, I'll bet. Furthermore, I'll credit him, he's got the slickest, best-iled po-litical machine this side of

THE DOMESTIC MOTIF 189

Tammany Hall. I wisht I had it here in Mahoos County fer my own 'musement and purposes. Whew! Would feathers fly? Now, now!"

Seth Lane raised his hands as though to deter Mr. Harrison from putting the self-answering query—would feathers fly? But such airiness on the sheriff's part was merely the screen of another purpose.

"'Nuther thing, Mr. Harrison,—did you hear who your father was goin' to put up as his candidate fer Congress in this district?"

"I can't really say, Sheriff. The primaries are a long way off."

"'Tain't so fur off, come to think of it. Some candidates are already gettin' their campaign started, I understand. Haven't you heard?"

"No, indeed."

"You didn't hear I was to take a shy at it? What, what!"

Harrison apologized for his ignorance of the matter, but excused himself upon the ground that it was taking him some time to pick up the stray ends of gossip in Galeville.

"But this ain't gossip; this is facts," remonstrated the sheriff. He smiled at Alice. Not caring for politics at any time, and being particularly inimical to politics during the moments of Mr. Harrison's visit, Alice walked over to the piano and began play-

140 THE MAN WHO WON

ing. This hint was caught by the sheriff; Seth Lane dropped his affairs of moment, and wound up his watch for bedtime.

"I guess you two'll excuse me," he said. "Hey, mother, ain't you in the way, too?"

Mother would have remained, but a word from Seth Lane was law. Consequently she gathered up her sewing and withdrew after wishing Harrison a none too cordial farewell.

"Good night, Mr. Harrison," said Sheriff Lane with a bow. Then the afterthought: "You find out from your father who's he goin' to run for Congress—as a favor. Heh?"

"Certainly, Sheriff."

The *tick-tock* of the wall clock sounded like pistol shots to Harrison. He began to experience a panicky notion that his old perplexing shyness would grip him again. Alice Lane was leaning toward him receptively. Of the millions of thoughts he could not lay hold of one.

Alice fidgeted. Harrison reddened.

"Have—"

"It—"

Their sentences interlocked. Both laughed.

"Now what were you going to say, Mr. Harrison?"

"Not much, I fear."

"You were emeshed in gloom — or embarrassment. You do get embarrassed."

"Now do I?" he asked, alarmed.

"Yes, but I like it. It takes the edge off your boldness. . . . Indeed, you can be bold, and when you are I find that I can't ride roughshod over you. I lament it — you will not be led by a woman. But when you get one of your spells of backwardness, I can twist you and turn you — a mere baby."

"You have read me aright. Now how would you prefer me — bold or shy?"

"Both — to make up the real Mr. Harrison that I'm beginning to know."

"But I don't know the real Miss Lane."

"How fortunate! Then I shall be a thing of interest until you do get to know me — if you ever do."

"No, you are wrong in that. Trying to fathom you heightens my interest, I guess you are the sort of girl who will always be a question mark. Still, I have the time —"

"Mr. Harrison! Stop! . . . May I offer you some wine?"

"Thank you, yes. But let me finish. . . . Studying you would be the work — and the pleasure of years. . . ."

"I'm going for the wine,"

142 THE MAN WHO WON

The wine was in the cellar whence Alice went to fetch it. She had arrayed herself in a dainty apron, presenting a picture highly alluring to Mr. Harrison — a pretty girl in the accredited uniform of the home.

Alice returned with elderberry wine and apples. From the dining-room she brought home-made cakes. She set a small table with the sureness of an apt housewife. Harrison kept his eye on the apron. Came visions of comforts of home; came a yearning to know such peace — with her. Gad! but she was still *Miss Lane* to him. He must wait for another day — a far, far day, before he dare speak the words — if ever. In the meantime he would know no change of heart; he was convinced irrevocably that she held for him what no other woman could hold.

“Your cakes?” he asked.

“Yes, I bake.”

Harrison knew no young women who baked. Hitherto he would have fled the company of maidens so dully utilitarian. But somehow it dignified *this* girl. Or, he wondered, was it that he was so far swept away by her that anything she might do, no matter how drab or pointless, would deify her in his sight? No odds. He still adored the white apron.

“Please don’t take it off,” he pleaded, as she

made ready to join him at table. "Keep it on — as a stunt."

"How — a stunt?"

"Well . . . did you ever play house when you were a little girl? Yes, of course. And the tiny table meant a dining-room, and the rag dolls your own little children, and muddy water was real coffee — everything was real and all spelled Home. Now, Miss Lane, that apron of yours makes me feel the boy's side of playing house. There is a boy's side, you know, though few people suspect it. Every grown-up man, at some time or other, feels a longing for the realities of the toy dishes and the rag dolls — but I guess I'm getting in too deep. Don't think I talk this truck — often."

"Why — Mr. Harrison — er — it's creditable to you," she said. "I — I never thought you were — were quite *that way*. I considered you a cynic, but here you turn up with a tenderness for the fundamentals of life — family life and like that — Oh! Lord, I'm in deep, too. But please go on."

"No, I've gotten off my usual line to-night. Fine wine, Miss Lane."

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Harrison became conscious of a streaky light dancing across the carpet. In the doorway stood a lean mortal with a lantern swinging upon his arm. A blue coat of the National Guard and a

144 THE MAN WHO WON

kind of baggage-master's hat gave him the touch of authority which he evidently sought.

A quid of tobacco was buoyed within the cheek as stationary as a tooth.

"Busy, Miss Alice?" the newcomer called.

"You may come through here, Rufus," Alice answered pleasantly. "This is Mr. Harrison — Mr. Wilmot, the night jailer."

"And coroner, too, don't forget," said Rufus as he set down the lantern. "Yes, I'm a coroner of Mahoos County, if I do say it myself. 'Portant office — coroner. The sheriff is the highest officer in the county, and the coroner is the only man who durst arrest the sheriff. . . . I'm not interferin' with —"

He looked at Alice with his eyelids flickering. She smiled.

"'Cause if I was —" He rubbed his jaws by way of finishing the thought.

"Really, I must be going," said Harrison, looking at the clock hands narrowing to eleven.

"I'll light you to the street. Kinder stumbly over them paths."

"Yes, do, Rufus," directed Alice.

Rufus unlocked the front door.

"Well, then, Mr. Harrison, we'll start. . . . Out this here way," indicated the cicerone. The abrupt appearance of Rufus was annoying to Harrison who

THE DOMESTIC MOTIF 145

would have performed a less precipitate farewell. But there yawned the steel door, and the night air was fluttering Miss Lane's hair. So Harrison had to content himself with an unadorned "good-night," and then followed Rufus Wilmot's heels over the gravel.

"I jist got forty-four birds under lock and key t'night. Take any interest in crim'nals? It's quite a study. Helps me in my other line — coroner. Folks wonders why I take an interest in sich things, but I hold that a man, if he's got a perfession, he oughter take pains to study and see what's into it. Same's me — I sooner set in Smith Bowers' undertakin' parlor readin' vital st'istics than attendin' them movin' pitcher shows. . . . Look out fer that 'ere rain gutter."

"Forty-four prisoners, eh?"

"Yes, and would you b'lieve it, there is some what take such turrible pity onto them poor inner-cent lambs of thieves and burgalars as to holler 'bout the meals served, and con-demn the sheriff. Seth Lane wasn't elected to the office on the grounds that he was a rest'rint cheff. The rights of the people was his platform — not ham and eggs."

"I hadn't heard of any trouble," said Harrison, discreetly.

"There ain't so much trouble — only underhand

146 THE MAN WHO WON

gossip, sorter. . . . Well, I'll have to be biddin' you good night. Call again on us," said Rufus, as self-selected spokesman for the court house family.

"Thank you — I expect to."

Harrison began to whistle as he climbed into his roadster.

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. HARRISON TAKES HOLD

By extraordinary efforts—frenzied prodding of dressmakers, tours of shopping, servants rushed, tradesmen browbeaten, tears, forced smiles,—Mrs. Emily Graydon obtained the trousseau and was ready. Thus she had carried out the wishes of her lord and master-to-be, who had decreed an early wedding. No nonsense of protracted courtship for him. Edward Harrison was keen enough to see that a lover of fifty-four was apt to assume a silly cast in the eyes of the world.

One morning at eight Mrs. Graydon came downtown with Matilda Mulls to meet the Harrisons, father and son. The four hurried to the manse of an obscure pastor—picked by Harrison senior for this obscurity. Harrison had no church, and since he desired the whole affair kept secret until after the ceremony he recruited for his purpose the Reverend Dr. Theodore Bennett, who never had a finger in politics or a sermon in a newspaper.

And they were married.

Telford City gasped — then smiled. Its likeliest widower, its first citizen, its rarest catch at last had been lured to the yoke. What had befallen the remainder of the world had befallen him. Who had seen the bride? What was she like? Wealthy? Pretty? Or was it another instance of love-blind middle-age adoring a fright? Not a newspaper had a picture of the new Mrs. Harrison. There was a strange dearth of information. The town gossips had been cheated out of the delectable tidings, and had inherited a mystery.

“We’ll tear out this porch,” said Mrs. Edward Harrison as she ran her eye along the huge wooden structure which extended on three sides of the house.

“I don’t like it — looks like a deck of an excursion boat.”

“But the columns are Doric,” said Jack Harrison.

“Hollow — cheap. We’ll have them in stone.”

“Oh!”

Mrs. Harrison made her way over the velvety grass until she reached another vantage point where she could obtain a view of the house, cellar to roof.

“There, Jack — that cupola comes down. What an ugly thing? See? — I’ll have a turret put in its place — graystone, mediæval — can’t you see

MRS. HARRISON TAKES HOLD 149

the effect? . . . Then the sky-line is bad with those old-fashioned eaves. I have it! I'll have an attic built, something with contour — a new sky-line. . . . I hate to do over old houses."

"Yes, it is old," said Jack Harrison meekly. "My grandfather built it in 1874. He was my mother's father —"

It occurred to him that possibly he should not have spoken of his mother in the presence of the second Mrs. Harrison. He noticed that her black eyes were fixed upon him. She seemed puzzled.

"Your mother . . . left you the house, Jack?"

"No, she left father the house."

"Ah! . . . Now as to the hallway — it will never do as it is. Awfully dowdy. Wallpaper isn't the thing. Paneling, that's it. . . . The drawing-room is a sight — it's a 'parlor.' Out go the old-fashioned pieces and in comes furniture. Why, those easels — unthinkable! And the family portraits — well, we'll let your mother's portrait stay, of course. But we need some *oils*; can we pick up a few in Telford City?"

"I'm afraid not; not good ones."

"New York then. . . . The library isn't bad. Less books, though. It looks cluttered up with books everywhere."

"They're my books."

"Oh . . . well! Then we'll let them stay."

"Oh, no! It isn't necessary that they should. I write my — my editorials there. But I use very few of the books."

"You *are* an editor. I had forgotten. Now I sha'n't touch a thing in the library — not a match. Clutter it all you want — it's your work. You shall rule in that room."

Her tact was marvelous. He forgave all her iconoclastic acts. Surely this woman possessed a nimble mind — wits to smooth the way that she was marking out. Jack felt a premonition that great changes were coming. Instituted by her they might be tolerable.

"Now the housemaid, Minnie — no Mary, it is — she'll have to go. She's slovenly."

"Lord, she's been with us for fifteen years!" said Jack.

"She acts it. Told me to-day what her duties *are*. She joins in the family conversation at table. Another thing, she said she wouldn't move a piece of furniture out of your mother's room. That's to be a guest chamber."

"Father likes her," was Jack's final plea.

"She'll have to go."

There was no saving Mary. The realization of that fell upon him heavily. She was more to him now than she had ever been. She always seemed to be a part of the home. The years rolled back

MRS. HARRISON TAKES HOLD 151

upon him now — his youth interwoven with Mary's service. She had given him access to the pantry (sacred against juveniles) when he was a grammar school boy beset with constant hunger. And her fibs to save his face! And her staunch loyalty in sickness and in youthful trouble! Poor Mary!

Mrs. Harrison nourished a grudge against Mary. Mary, it seemed, had undertaken to accept Mrs. Harrison as a mere novice in housekeeping, as a newcomer who could not comprehend the workings of the vast Harrison domestic machinery. She actually endeavored to teach Mrs. Harrison, step by step, the colossal lesson. Mary also had endeavored to protect many articles long cherished by the Harrisons from the ruthless invader. A family album featuring fashions under the Garfield administration she rescued from a trash barrel and placed in her trunk as honorable salvage. Mary's prime offense, however, lay in her frequent panegyrics upon the life and character of the deceased Mrs. Harrison, and a constant detailing to the new Mrs. Harrison a history of the perfect housekeeping methods of her lamented predecessor. This deification of the dead was taken as implied attack upon the living — and Mary was doomed to pack.

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Dinner was rather a trying affair for the three. Mrs. Harrison came downstairs gowned as if for

152 THE MAN WHO WON

the opera, though they had no plans for the evening. An hour or two of mild chatter on the veranda — without company — was the prospect. Yet Mrs. Harrison was sumptuously arrayed. She typified the Gotham diner-out — beauty on show at the evening board. Mrs. Harrison said she always dressed “for evening,” no matter whether she went out or not, no matter if she went to bed right after dinner. One could never tell — some one might drop in. Thus the bulwarks of beauty were always guarded against surprise.

Edward Harrison had endeavored to measure up to his wife sartorially. He wore a dinner coat and looked quite abject in it. Dinner coats and Edward Harrison thus became partners late in life. But he was not allowing the change to irk him greatly. To please his young wife was his aim, and he was not willing that anything should spoil his joy. He gave ground to her — his sole conqueror. The lion of men was meek. He was so meek that his son felt pity for him. He was so forcedly boyish too, was Edward Harrison: a rôle that did not become him; nor were his attempts at humor very convincing. Forcefulness of nature was the trait which had won him Emily Graydon. Now he was foolishly striving to take on the lighter graces of lady’s man when he should have stayed Edward Harrison, the iron-

MRS. HARRISON TAKES HOLD 158

blooded wielder of power whom rough fellows idolized.

Jack began to wonder whether middle-life love would make a donkey out of a man whose common sense would be vouched for by the oaths of ten thousand men in Telford City.

The dinner itself bespoke Mrs. Harrison's planning. It outstripped anything that father and son were wont to sit down to at their little table, now grown to nearly double its usual size to hold the proud display of nuptial plate. Mrs. Harrison's menu, which created a panic in the kitchen but was carried out after heaven-moving exertions, consisted of a rich soup, shad roe, baked spaghetti with capon livers, baby lamb *en casserole*, a half dozen vegetables, and three desserts of recent blessed discovery. And for three!

Mrs. Harrison was presiding in her clever, tactful way. She spoke so pleasantly to the maid Mary, that no one would suppose this was to be Mary's last meal of service. Mary's face was a mirror of pent-up resentment. Occasionally she would cast a piteous glance at the head of the table, but there was so sign of respite or pardon upon the face of Mr. Harrison the elder. The servitor of years had no friend in the doting bridegroom. And then she would glance at Jack. Her shiny face with its furrows of work and care, her helpless ignorance,

struck mightily upon his sympathy. But he dropped his eyes.

"I was thinking — couldn't we get a little crowd here to-night?" said Mrs. Harrison, directing her question to her husband.

"We might. Eh, Jack?" In this fashion Edward Harrison was rather nervously transferring the burden to his son. Truth to tell, Edward had no "crowd." Aside from the men of his club and his politics, he was bereft of social connections. He had cultivated no "families" in the sense that their womenfolk could be summoned to meet his wife. He knew many men like brothers, but their family life was a closed door to him. Virtually any circle would have welcomed him had he wished it, and here was his young wife clamoring for company! A rift in his happiness — this. Of course the Mullses, the Storridges, et. al., had called, but nothing very definite in a social way had resulted from these visits. To-night the Harrisons had nothing in view; last night the same condition prevailed. To-morrow — Edward Harrison saw that it was high time he bestirred himself.

"Get up something, can't you, Jack?" he asked. "A party or something."

"Well — I might get some kids here — Evelyn Smith, Eva Wilcox, Jason Storridge, and that bunch."

MRS. HARRISON TAKES HOLD 155

"Do," urged Mrs. Harrison enthusiastically. "I like kids. Can't you get that pretty little thing — Doris? She's nice."

"Oh — Doris. . . . I suppose so." Jack drooped at this suggestion. Between his work — and Alice Lane — Doris had been almost forgotten these ten days. Yet he assented.

They had progressed to the last of the desserts when the near approach of leavetaking unnerved Mary. She broke into hysterical tears and rushed back into the pantry with her tray of unserved coffee.

"Don't mind her, Emily," exhorted Harrison soothingly. "Don't mind her, dear."

Following dinner, Jack rounded up a "crowd" by telephone, and then called in person for Eva Wilcox and Doris Edwards. To Doris the invitation was little less than a godsend; it bridged over the heart pangs of weeks of neglect. Eva permitted Doris to twitter at Jack without interruption. She actually suspected that the two were bonded in a pretty little romance.

When she reached the house there were half a dozen guests already assembled. One young man diligently debated the topic of preferential voting to demonstrate his cleverness to the supreme political critic. Parenthetically, the young man was under suspicion of having councilmanic aspirations.

The remainder of the company were mutely uncomfortable. There was no room here for Mrs. Harrison's lightening touch. She did not understand politics — or politicians.

Jack's entrance with his two gracious partners was opportune. There ensued an unstiffening of backs and facial expressions. Light words fell. Preferential Voting was crowded off the veranda.

With the coming of discursive chatter, Mrs. Harrison was in native estate. She was sober to the serious and gleeful to the gay. She charmed. Within a half hour her power was admitted, admired. Edward Harrison stuck to his modest corner. He was absolutely effaced. The Great Man of the city was not missed in this prattle. Stolidly he smoked and listened to the prankish hubbub of youth — a mystified man.

Nearby Muriel Clayton had Mrs. Harrison's ear.

"The theaters are closing for the season. You'll find Telford City terribly dull now," said Muriel.

"It isn't New York, of course," replied Mrs. Harrison.

"Oh! New York — how could you ever leave it?"

"Marriage, you know —"

"Certainly. I was merely joking. But, really, this town is awful in summer. I wouldn't stay

MRS. HARRISON TAKES HOLD 157

here for worlds. Don't think of it. It's quite unbearable."

Mrs. Harrison's hopes of better things to come were dashed by Muriel's broadside.

Edward Harrison wondered why his plans of happiness need be menaced by Sim Clayton's prattling daughter.

During the buzz and hum Jack Harrison excused himself and withdrew. He had seen a figure in the driveway. He followed. At the gate he caught up with Mary, packed and dressed for travel.

"I thought it was you, Mary."

"Oh! . . . Mr. John! . . ." exclaimed Mary. "I was beginnin' to think you wasn't goin' to say good-by even! I waited in the kitchen near two hours, but —"

"No, indeed. You mustn't think that I've changed . . . in the way I've always thought of you, Mary."

"'A course you haven't. Nor your father ain't changed, fer that matter. Right down in his heart he ain't got nothin' against poor old Mary, who'd run through fire 'n water for him. No, tain't his fault. That cross, high-toned thing from N' York jest got him *bewildered*. Young blood makin' an old head dizzy. Never mind, Mary'll forgive him. . . . Mr. John, I hate to say good-by to you. You've been my boy so long. I . . . I kinder

158 THE MAN WHO WON

thought I was goin' to be let die in this house, but it seems . . ."

"Don't cry, Mary."

"Well—I'll not. . . . Just the same, *she* ain't goin' to bring no luck to this home. You watch out and see if I'm right."

"Have you any place in view?"

"No, sir."

"Where are you going to-night?"


"To my sister's, Mrs. Tiernan, twenty-four Chapel Street."

"Twenty-four Chapel Street. Well, I'll see you there at 8 o'clock to-morrow night, Mary. Then we'll talk over matters and see what we can do. You mustn't worry because I'm going to take care of you. See, Mary?"

"Oh, Mr. John! . . . Bless—"

"Good-by, Mary." She walked clumsily away in the dark, her bent shoulders bobbing to the swing of two satchels. Somehow, she brought to him the thought of his mother. His mother's memory had been sacred to Mary. . . . Now the maid was clambering laboriously upon a street car at the corner. The car rattled away. Mary was gone.

He strode back to the house with the resolution fully formed that the welfare of the old servant in the days to come to him would be urgent business.



MRS. HARRISON TAKES HOLD 159

“Jack — where have you been?” inquired Mrs. Harrison.

“Why. . . . I said good-by to Mary.”

Edward Harrison heard. And by his own self-analysis he dwindled to a pigmy of a man — he who preached faithfulness and loyal service to his henchmen.— Bah! He was miserable.

CHAPTER XIV

A MATTER OF SOCIAL STRATA

As time wore on Mrs. Harrison had one refuge from ennui—the Mulls family. Nearly every afternoon she motored over for tea. Although the tea talk was rather dull, these afternoons were more agreeably spent than moping at home with low spirits. With dismantlers at work taking *age* out of the Harrison homestead, and carpenters hammering modernness into it, escape was a delight to the new mistress of the homestead. To sit beneath the scaffolding and wreckage was difficult enough when necessary, and it was necessary each evening when Edward Harrison returned to his home to enjoy the idle hours.

At the Mulls home there was, at least, hope of a more congenial existence. Mrs. Harrison met a few people there. She unbent marvelously, made new acquaintances with her usual ease, and received pressing hints to bind these acquaintanceships with an interchange of visits. But Mrs. Harrison was elusive upon this score; she accepted people experi-

mentally; thus visits were postponed until the women of the Mulls' set had demonstrated their worthiness. To make a poor start socially in this strange city was Mrs. Harrison's pet abhorrence. Of the Mulls family she entertained doubt. That they dare not stand forth as social tip-toppers was her suspicion. Yet the Mullses were all she had to lean on, thus far. They and their followers must *do* until her house was complete, her foothold established and then —. At any rate, Mrs. Harrison had not remained awake at night to be devoid of plans.

One Saturday afternoon when she was studying the Mulls' tulip beds from a shady side veranda — thinking of the galvanic Saturday afternoons of the Gotham of revered memory — the elder Storridges called. That is, they halted their motor at the curb. Mrs. Harrison leaned over the mudguard with Mrs. Henry Mulls and the willowy Matilda.

The upshot of twenty minutes' parley was that Mrs. Harrison and the Mullses were to join the Storridges in their trip to the Country Club. Not over-pleased with the idea, Mrs. Harrison consented to go on account of the Mulls women, who were carried away with the notion of a great treat in store for them. Henry Mulls, a gnarled democrat, simply would not join; he contended that the Country Club was a nest of social climbers who paid

dues for the purpose of being frost-nipped by the *noblesse* of Laurel Avenue. Henry Mulls had some stern virtues — these his family lamented.

A tennis match was being played when the Storridge party arrived. Mr. H. Storridge doffed his duster and lead the way to the crowd. They stood back of a wall of spectators and occasionally caught a glimpse of the players. A few persons gazed at the party. H. Storridge, however, did not appear to be acquainted at this particular point of the crowd. No introductions were made. The Mullses became silent and depressed. Mrs. Harrison squirmed on her heels, and put the afternoon down as one of the most vapid in her life. Certainly the Storridges were "out of the swim." Hereafter, Mrs. Harrison would take pains not to put herself under their social protection. She glanced slyly at H. Storridge. He was intently interested in the match — that is, all he could see. A least touch of oil from his auto gloves had smeared upon his cheek, and more than ever he looked a mechanic — a machinist!

Her choler began to rise at Edward Harrison — he was responsible for her position among such people!

After interminable minutes the matches were finished, a cup was awarded, and then the crowd dispersed; all feet were bound for the clubhouse.

The Storridge party followed, sheep-like and deserted.

Upon the clubhouse lawn and piazzas, and in the parlors the throng gathered in bright, chatty groups as a preliminary to the dansante. All chairs had been preëmpted. The Storridges, standing about stiffly, exchanged a few salutations. But no one had so much as halted for a moment's word. Matilda Mulls had one or two young men under aim, but they did not come near enough to be winged. Matilda, too, was provoked at the inconsequential Storridges. Here it was five o'clock and not a soul — a male soul — to the credit of a civil handshake. An afternoon without men — in an acre of them — was positive calamity to Matilda Mulls.

"Isn't this awful?" remarked Matilda under her breath to Mrs. Harrison, after they had detached themselves a short distance from the Storridges.

"Terrible! *They're* perfect sticks. Seems they don't know anybody," replied Mrs. Harrison indignantly.

"Can't we get away? I know some *people* — Oh, Lord! Here come Jason and Muriel."

Jason Storridge and Muriel Clayton had, in fact, arrived — breathlessly; for Jason had reserved a table and was for hurrying back before his equity in it should expire.

"Can't you fix us up at your table? We've been

standing two hours or more," said H. Storridge to his son.

"I—I suppose I could. . . . Oh, yes—we could," returned Jason, mentally changing his order from rye high to lemonade.

It happened that the Storridge table was advantageously placed between the table occupied by the Blatchfords and the one occupied by the Ranson Gordons. To accommodate the increase of the Jason Storridge's party, additional chairs were obtained, much to the curtailment of leg and elbow room hitherto enjoyed by the Blatchford and Gordon coteries. A few unpleasant glances were cast at the Storridge table. It was annoying to be so crammed by factory families—quite! And the the Storridges appeared fully conscious of the social charges against them. Only Mrs. Harrison with her snappy black eyes dared give challenge. She returned the glances with a haughty stare.

The H. Storridges ordered vanilla ice cream, which comported well with their known conservatism, while Jason looked gloomily at the lemonade of his forced choice. Jason was a probationer. His "doings" of early spring were still marked upon the parental memory. And so he martyred himself to lemonade. Muriel, a candidate for daughtership here, also took lemonade, by no means her usual fancy. Cocktails, new-named and mod-

erately deranging, were her liking. . . . Jason's and Muriel's afternoon had been ruined!

The ballroom, viewed through the open French windows, was filled with dancers enjoying the crowning phase of a busy day. H. Storridge did not dance and Jason Storridge was no dancer, which was quite an equivalent disbarment. The privation fell heaviest upon Matilda Mulls. Her pride of self was stirred. To be "manless" on this holiday while watching girls undergoing a twinkling change of partners throughout the minutes, was sheer disparagement of personality, a denial of one's magnetic force.

"Jason, you're a friend of mine — see Willie MacDowell there? Go tell him I want him to dance with me," said Matilda in desperation.

"Matilda! The idea!" ejaculated Mrs. Henry Mulls.

"I don't care. I'm not going to sit here *like this* any longer," protested Matilda. The H. Storridges were crestfallen.

Jason at length agreed to bring Willie MacDowell, and accordingly the young gentleman was produced together with an accidental catch, a Mr. Seagreave, who happened to be fast in Willie MacDowell's clutches when Matilda's summons came. The very great distinction about Mr. Seagreave was that he lived on Laurel Avenue. Even the staring

166 THE MAN WHO WON

Blatchfords raised the query: "How in the world did they get *him*?" Mr. Seagreave was smiling, tolerant, and had an air as though he were seeing adventure in untrod regions. Normally he should have asked Muriel to dance. Instead, he asked Mrs. Harrison about whom he thought there was something attractive—and whose name he had not caught.

"I've never seen you before," said Mr. Seagreave, in a voice to please, as they took the dance floor.

"I'm a stranger here. . . . I thought you knew."

"Knew? Indeed, Miss—I didn't get your name. Is it 'Miss'?"

"'Miss'? Heavens, no! *Mrs.* Harrison."

"Not Mrs. Edward Harrison?" he asked. When she nodded, he added confusedly: "Oh! I beg your pardon. I didn't know—really—"

Mr. Seagreave's attitude was not due to the fact that she was married (which is no weighty consideration at any time to an adventuring Seagreave), but because she was Harrison-married. The potent name took the edge off his jauntiness. His blunder terrified him. In his hands now she seemed to him like hallowed flesh.

"I don't know how I came to make such a silly error," he said, red and respectful. "I'm generally very good at names."

"Do not let it disturb you, Mr. Seagreave."

"It does — intensely. . . . I never dreamed you could be Mrs. Harrison."

"And why not?"

"Oh, I don't know."

He tried to be evasive, but to no avail.

"I know, Mr. Seagreave. It's because of the Storridges," — she smiled significantly — "You didn't think you'd find Mrs. Harrison with them; now, did you?"

"Well — you could put it that way. The Storridges —"

"I comprehend. One doesn't elevate oneself in Telford City with Storridges," she remarked bluntly. "I didn't realize it until I came here this afternoon."

"Now, Mrs. Harrison, won't you let me present you to some very dear people? You won't make a mistake — this time."

Here was opportunity. It was of the sort for which she had longed. But it was opportunity which her judgment did not set down as suspiciously timed. To come fresh from the obscure Storridge table to the intimacies of the dominant set by way of a chance acquaintance with a rover like Mr. Seagreave, did not tally with Mrs. Harrison's preconceived desire to make entry at the golden portal with preparation and a certain formal distinction.

"Really, Mr. Seagreave, Telford City people do not matter a bit to me. But I thank you very much."

What manner of woman was this to refuse meeting the Motleys and the Guildfords and such luminaries among the town's chosen? More than ever an object of wonder and surprise was this woman with whom he had almost bungled into an attempted flirtation.

After their dance he hastened back to his friends with rapt word of praise, nor did he forget to add that, socially, she desired to get nowhere, as witness the rejection of his proposal. So Mrs. Harrison became for a brief moment a figure of note, a rather sharp-cut incident, and then — forgotten.

Matilda Mulls retained her Willie MacDowell notwithstanding Mr. Seagreave's desertion; and upon Willie she pressed her solicitude to further expand the very slight acquaintance she had with the vaporous Mr. Seagreave, who "seemed so nice, but Lord — why didn't he stay a minute?" Willie MacDowell made some promises regarding Seagreave, which Matilda labeled Hope; and then she settled down to the thought that the afternoon had been moderately piquant.

But Muriel was of the contrary opinion.

"Awfully dull here. . . . Never come again Sat-

urday afternoons," she lamented. "Really these *society* people are spoiling the Club."

"Stuck-ups — the whole of them," commented H. Storridge.

"Mr. Seagreave seemed quite free," Mrs. Harrison volunteered.

"Maybe so, but I didn't hear of him inviting any of this party to meet his special friends among the frozen-faces," returned Jason Storridge with leaden sarcasm.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Harrison. "He expressly asked me to meet his friends — the Guildfords, the Motleys, do you call them? . . . But I didn't care about it."

"For God's sake — Emily!" said Matilda Mulls.

CHAPTER XV

THE SHERIFF MAKES A HAUL

THE inmates of the Mahoos County jail had dwindled to twenty-two souls, a low-ebb mark not hitherto reached during the term of Sheriff Seth Lane. Reformers said that Mahoos County was waxing in goodness, due to the eclipse of the liquor traffic, the chastening effect of the hard times, the religious-wave, or to a dozen other heavenly or governmental blessings. It was a prodigious fact, a sermon in figures: twenty-two prisoners, a half-filled jail — halleluiah!

Linked to the joy of the reformers was the desolation of Sheriff Lane. The tide of righteousness cost him dear — a loss to be reckoned in dollars and cents for every empty cell, for every mouth gone beyond the pale of his profitable victualing.

Sheriff Lane, driving a heavy roan to a two-seater, with Constables Eb Linton, Daniel Crowell and Sam Fitch as companions, portended certain ominous events in the opinion of Galeville citizens who watched the rig lumbering out of town. In the height of their pride of employment, the con-

stables looked sternly ahead and ignored the attention of the townspeople along the curbstones. The only barometer of their official agitation was the rather frequent paroxysm of tobacco expectoration.

The two-seater passed the town line, and continued into a flat, open country where growing crops and plowed earth cut up the landscape into geometric greens and browns. At the edge of the road were wild flowers in profusion; ferns were peeping through the rail fences, and whole meadows were expressing Spring in terms of buttercups and daisies.

Freed from the curiosity of townsmen, the functionaries of the law relaxed. Eb Linton thrust an ease-loving foot over the wagon-box, and dangled it playfully near the wheel spokes. Eb turned to study the roadside scenery, and his back was companionably propped up against Daniel Crowell's shoulder. Daniel Crowell was munching certain small cakes, which he had thoughtfully provided to withstand the sharpening action of country air upon the normal appetite. Sam Fitch, on the front seat, was in song, while Sheriff Lane hung his heels upon the dashboard, and was permitting the roan to go her own pace. Clearly, their business — whatever it was — permitted an abundance of leisure this fine morning.

"Hey, Sam, are you singin' to enntertain us or

172 THE MAN WHO WON

jist fer to keep your courage up?" asked Sheriff Lane.

"Me? Why, courage and me is brothers, She'ff."

"Listen to Sam Fitch! You might think he couldn't be skeered," commented Daniel Crowell.

"I kin, Dan, but not by the things that is liable to skeer you."

"Skeer me? It didn't skeer me to take Jim Hamilton, the murderer," expostulated Dan.

"When he was a-sleep — and drunk," said Linton, who entered the fray gratuitously.

"Oh, hush, Eb Linton! You make me tired," replied Dan Crowell the harassed. "What'd you ever tackle 'cept frightened correspondents in d'vorce suits, and some wimen folks in dispossess? . . . Take me, f'rinstance. You seen me lay holt of Sing Sing Charlie atter he smacked your face rude and run down Cadmus Street on the forf' of Feberwary, nineteen hundert and ten. . . . Linton, you are all right when it comes to slippin' process under front doors, or preservin' order in I. O. O. F. Hall durin' a lexsher on Christian Science; but when it comes to captures — Linton, you need help."

"Thet so? Well, was you or was you not present — answer, if you please — when I jumped into the Maugatee River and rescued Mis' Townsend

from drownin'?" was Linton's pointed query.

"I a'mit you're a swimmer," rejoined Crowell. "But you oughter be a coast guard 'stead of a constable — is what I say."

"Here, here, you fellers!" shouted Sheriff Lane from the front seat. "Quit the snarlin'. Come to it, I wouldn't lay trust onto any of the three of you in a pinch onless you had two guns apiece and was shootin' from behind a stun wall."

"Thet's right, She'ff," laughed Linton.

Winding out of a long curve in the road, the rig came to a railroad crossing, upon which circumstance the wagon's occupants began to show the first signs of action that morning. Minor gabble ceased. Four heads swung a steady gaze down-track to the south. The roan mare pawed. A flock of crows shrilled blatantly out of a wheat field. Up from the tracks came the heat of the rails. Road-bed blackened and greasy signified that this was a drilling spot for locomotives.

"There she comes! Look!" cried the sheriff.

Miles away approaching on a bee-line of steel was the stirring Something for which the four waited. The two-seater became electric with animation. Across the flank of the roan mare fell a birch switch, and the roan broke galloping into the shale road paralleling the tracks, racing her poor best to the tune of the lashings. A half mile down the road

the sheriff pulled up. Constables Linton and Crowell got out, and jiggled their stiffened legs.

"You two mount the freight at the water tank and work to the rear. Me and Sam Fitch'll work toward you from the caboose. Now git!" shouted Sheriff Lane, and his detached myrmidons forthwith legged it across a field of stumps to the embanked tracks. "She'ff, this oughter be a good year for hoboes," observed Sam Fitch companionably, as he and the sheriff rode to their appointed station.

"Sam, you 'tend to ketchin' 'em and I'll 'tend to figurin' on 'em. Understand?" reproved the sheriff.

"Oh, all right, She'ff. I only thought —"

Sam Fitch made no effort to finish the sentence.

The locomotive pulled up short at the water tank with a series of crashes following down its linked tail of cars. The badged representatives of Mahoos County mounted, two at either end, to comb the train for their prey. Prospects of game were good. The spring travel had set in from South to North,—a seasonal amenity known only to the hopelessly pauperized and the hopelessly rich. To trudge the cool flagstones of New York and Boston when negroes and mules are being worked in the heat of Georgia,—such was the very reasonable

aim and intent of these bedouins of the rail. And for this was the railroad company bilked of passage.

"Here's one!" shouted Eb Linton, peering over the edge of a "reefer" car into an empty "coalie," beneath the rim of which reposed a sooty gentleman six days gone from the orange groves. The sooty gentleman sat still, a meek prisoner. Life to him was but a succession of interrupted excursions; jails and lockups being the way stations of the Great Tour.

"I'm a dollar-twenty to you, ain't I?" he asked, with a sort of pride in the monetary meaning of his arrest.

"Nope. Dollar-seventy. We git fifty cents fer your dinner," said Linton.

"Do I get the dinner?"

"No, you fool. Didn' I tell you we git the fifty cents?" answered Linton, leaping upon the ground and motioning to his captive to follow.

A moment later Constable Daniel Crowell bagged another rider,— a lad of fourteen or so — who had been billed through as freight until Crowell hauled him from beneath a sewing machine in a way car.

"Mister, I'm going to Portland to see my mother," said the boy, calm in his confidence in universal adult protection.

"No, you ain't. You won't see your mother for maybe three months," replied Crowell.

176 THE MAN WHO WON

A brakeman's shouts down the track presaged interference.

"Hi, there," he cried, rushing up. "Leave that kid be. He's ridin' free."

"Whose orders by?" asked Crowell.

"Why — we've been passin' him on. It's all right."

"'Tain't all right. You see the She'ff 'bout it."

Sheriff Lane, arriving with two captives, was appealed to in the special case. The sheriff inclined his head with profound attention to the brakeman. . . . Then he shook his head sadly — Justice pained to act.

"I like to 'commodeate you railrud fellers, but my duty to Mahoos County comes fust. Take the lad, Eb."

Constables and their charges slouched back to the two-seater from which a long chain was produced, and the prisoners fettered.

"Don't we eat?" asked the man from the orange groves.

"Eat? Not ontill to-night," answered the sheriff.

"To-night?" repeated Daniel Crowell, challenging the joyless program. "How long are we goin' to work on this here job?"

"*Fifteen cells,*" said the sheriff significantly.

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Jack Harrison was cutting "suburban copy" in

the *Eagle* office — fatuous jottings from Clifton, Centre Haven, Dennisville and a number of cross-roads house-groupings raised to the dignity of a name and a place. Feeble compositions these: written on tablet paper, and, mostly, in a feminine hand. The editorial eye, however, could glean therefrom that the Coopers of Centre Haven had safely returned from a day's trip to Dennisville, and that the Memorial Day bills would be audited at the "residence" of Comrade Spooner at East Trunwich on Tuesday night, and that there was an "elegant display of Early Gwendolines" in the yard of Mrs. Hattie Dubois, Wellington Road; and that "nothing has been heard of the robbers who broke into Dalrymple's General Store two weeks ago last Wednesday."

A basket at hand held the copy that was ready for the lone type-setting machine. There was sweat on Harrison's forehead and on the back of his writing hand where the light of the low-set globe fell with its steady warmth. Sounds of the gay night life of Galeville came through the open window. Across the street the Bijou was disgorging its mid-evening crowd from a breathless four-reeler. A few doors down the town band was in rehearsal for the summer-evening concerts — attacking the classics in both a musical and a purely physical sense. Thunder rolled forth from a bowl-

ing alley near by. Habitues of a popular cigar store were seated in the roadway scanning with a friendly eye the white-garbed maidens who passed and repassed in review. Beneath the *Eagle* windows a youth was teasing a girl, a foolish, giggling girl; and Harrison learned more than the rest of the world knew.

The telephone bell rang. It was his partner, Woods, whose nights were given to scouting "ads."

"Harrison! . . . A Party is here at Miller's . . . drinking chocolate soda. If you wish, come out and I'll take the desk."

"All right, Woods. I'll be right down," said Harrison with glee in his tones.

The Party at Miller's rose from chocolate soda as Harrison entered. After purchasing ten cents' worth of something he had not a use for in the world, he offered his company for the trip homeward. Alice Lane smiled. But what of the suffused cheek so daintily aglow the moment Jack appeared in the shop? . . . But in Jack Harrison there was both a lack of complacent egotism, and an understanding of her facial expression; he did not comprehend that he had given her a thrill. He did not conceive that he had progressed greatly since the re-alignment of their friendship at Eva Wilcox's dance. To his thought, they were still the merest acquaintances. He had not been seeing her fre-

quently; but, he felt, quite as frequently as she had been seeing Sewell Bullard, and there was food for congratulation in that. He viewed Bullard as a figure of contrast—the best obtainable—with which to measure his own advance in her regard.

They walked home along a wide avenue aisled with elms. The lights of houses set back from the street were dancing through the foliage of tree and bush. Laughter floated from the verandas. Into the zone of delicately scented verbenas, of the powerfully fragrant syringa, they strolled, drinking in the essence of a June night—the poesy of nature at its highest expression.

“The trolley cars are filled this evening,” Harrison said, as unpoetical as one could possibly be on this rare night.

“I suppose it’s on account of the heat,” she answered.

“Yes, it’s the heat.”

They turned into the Court House grounds, and continued along the slightly ascending pathway, dim with shadows. It was bad walking, and Harrison took Alice’s arm.

On the wide portico they took chairs. A light breeze was playing among the columns. The flagstones at their feet were cool. The bustle of the town was cut away by intervening trees. Here was the one delectable nook in the humid night.

180 THE MAN WHO WON

Harrison bared his head to the soft stirring of the air.

"Well — this is fine!" he marveled. "I had no idea there was such a spot."

"On hot nights — come here. You know you may," she laughed.

"Oh! . . . Now won't I. Just you see if I don't . . . if you mean it."

He elevated his tone interrogatively.

"Mean it?" she repeated. "Really, Mr. Harrison."

"Of course you do," he apologized. "You see, I didn't quite realize for the moment how really *true* it was that you — well, I do hope we have a great many hot nights."

Alice smiled.

"You don't mind saying . . . what you want," she observed.

"No, I don't mind. How else may I get what I want?"

"H-mm! It is a good way, I suppose. Well, my offer still stands — hot nights."

"And soon there is to be a summerful of them. How lucky I am!"

"But you aren't to come *every* night, Mr. Arison; remember that."

"No? Of course not. Others will want an evening or so."

"Never mind about that."

"I do. It pains me immensely to think there *are* any others."

"Why — Mister — Harrison!"

He had ventured too far, he feared. With sober, intent face she was directing upon him a studying glance. "Of course you are joking," she said, finally.

Harrison hesitated. To admit he was merely in play would acquit him of intending to utter the immense, but untimely and probably unacceptable truth of his liking for her. Yet that truth must some day be said. Why not let it stand said? The daring rather than the abject course appealed to him of a sudden.

"Joking? I wouldn't want you to think that, Miss Lane."

"Then I ought to be angry."

"You ought, no doubt, unless . . . you don't mind having me feel that way toward you."

She gave a gasp.

"Of all men, you — you —"

"I understand I am embarrassing. I embarrass myself. Yet I am glad you *know* . . . now. Unquestionably I've been awkward. I hadn't meant to say anything about this matter — to-night. Somehow I drifted into it."

"But, Mr. Harrison, what do you mean?"

"Now there's the difficulty. I got into this rather hurriedly . . . don't you know. There is so much to be said and I can't seem to lay hold of the words I want. Probably later on would have been better. Or worse. One can't tell. It's a mere gamble at the best. There's really no knowing *when*. . . Won't you at least grant that I'm very serious about this?"

"Mr. Harrison, you're tremendously alarming to talk to — to-night — when you're serious."

Even friendliness had departed from her expression.

"I — I presume so," he answered abruptly. Here, then, was his answer. A dispiriting, weighted thing of disaster. "It must be ten at least," he added, rising in defeat.

"Have I frightened you away? — you have been so bold," she said, remaining seated as a sign that she had not granted his release.

"Almost frightened away," he replied, returning to his chair. "I thought I had shocked you."

"You did. But I saw you had shocked yourself too, which showed that none of it was premeditated. I guess we're having Romeo and Juliet weather. And this portico seems to impel young men to say strange things."

"Has —"

"Yes, others have, but they were not urged to

remain afterward — like you. So there — be satisfied!”

“I am supremely contented, Miss Lane.”

Harrison was in a glow, if not from actual victory, at least from hope. Other young men who had spoken as much, or as little, had been shown the pathway to the street. He, Jack Harrison, had uttered his heart's wish — unavailingly 'tis true — but had been bidden to sit out the evening in unimpaired friendship.

The tread of heavy feet over the gravel path came to Harrison's ears. Out of the darkness appeared a line of men chained by twos, dust-laden, foot-weary — fifteen birds of passage bagged for pot. The wayfarer from the orange groves was staggering along, his strength almost gone. Other adepts in starvation were bearing their chains with a sturdier step. The sheriff gloated. His was the felicity of the fisherman gazing at his boatload delivered to wharf. A settled income for weeks! They had been tried and sentenced as a mere incident of the walk from the railroad tracks. The magistrates of Mahoos County likewise derived fees per head for the day's haul.

The line of prisoners was strung down the Court House steps and over-lapped the portico walk like a big humped snake. It was at a halt, waiting the

184 THE MAN WHO WON

orders of the sheriff, who was at present protecting the rear from the well-intentioned aggressions of a few citizens whom the cavalcade had drawn to it, notwithstanding that the back streets had been taken to avoid public hubbub.

In the meantime Harrison had risen politely as a mark of respect to Family Business. Alice Lane grew very red in humiliating acknowledgment of Family Business.

The sheriff came up to the portico. He kissed Alice, forgetting the trials of office. Then noticing Harrison, he reassumed the "cares" of office.

"Hey, Harrison, you needn't to bother 'bout writin' an account of this round-up of bums in to-morrer's *Eagle*," remarked Sheriff Lane, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the nearest "bum."

"I hadn't even thought of it," reassured the editor and part owner of the Galeville *Eagle*.

CHAPTER XVI

BREWSTER ENTERS THE LISTS

ONCE a year the Ladies' Aid Society of the Fourth Church of Galeville conducted a strawberry festival, which took rank in point of social importance with the gala entertainments of the Volunteer Firemen, the Wolves, and the Improved Sons of America. The festival tickets cost fifty cents, and found ready sale, partly for the enticement of the strawberries themselves, partly "for the sake of the church."

But neither of these considerations was related to the motives of Sheriff Seth Lane in his attendance. Sheriff Lane was there at the prompting of self-interest — to meet people he had not hitherto met, to charm acquaintances afresh, and to play the game of exchanging a handshake for a vote. The fact that his wife and daughter accompanied him added, he thought, to his importance. Thus for a dollar and a half Seth Lane impressed simple folk with his worthiness as a community pillar, a father, a husband and a patron of laudable works. More-

over, the sheriff gave an excellent account of himself at the table. To eat heartily was a sign of definite character in Galeville — physical heartiness, bigness of nature, magnanimity and allied attributes. Eating in public for the public had always been one of Seth Lane's political dexterities.

"Wun't you please hand me 'nuther plate of that strawberry whip, Sister Whitcomb," said Lane. Mrs. Whitcomb and the attendant ladies were captivated by this evident compliment to the excellence of their cooking.

"We're always glad to have you with us," declared Mrs. Whitcomb.

"This is my eighth year comin' here," replied the sheriff, raising his tone slightly in order that the historic fact might carry to the end of the long supper table. "But I don't take any credit helpin' the Ladies' Aid. In my 'ficial position I see each day their noble 'complishments among the poor and the onsaved of this town. Oh! the misery we meet."

Electric bulbs were twinkling in strings across the church lawn. The church orchestra was playing a tune of admitted popularity. With a pronounced air of professional adaptation to the kitchen, stout matrons were performing mysterious culinary rites in open booths. A slim judicious pastor buzzed about, endeavoring to see that stran-

BREWSTER ENTERS LISTS 187

gers were properly welcomed and that his flock was properly shepherded. Maidens sponsored only by a ticket of admission were observed to be under the active protection of ribboned men of the committee. On the wire fences hung urchins with their eyes ravenously following the bewildering dishes.

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“Have you met my darter, Mr. Brewster?”

The sheriff's big hand was on Ralph Brewster's slender arm, and another big hand was holding Alice about the waist. It was evident to the young persons that they were being drawn together by Seth Lane's tautening arms — spectacularly. Undoubtedly the sheriff was making much of this meeting.

“May I show you through the church, Miss Lane?” Brewster asked, after the three had been talking for a few minutes.

Upon her assent, they walked into the church edifice. Brewster pointed out the new organ, the refurnished pastor's study, the boys' drill room, the girls' sewing and cooking classrooms.

“Here is my Sunday School room. I teach a class, you know,” he said, placing his hand lovingly upon his chair of office. Alice thought that Brewster's enthusiasm began and ended here.

“Won't you come to my class some time?” he inquired.

"Oh, no, Mr. Brewster. I — I don't really feel . . . that way. I'm heathen, I guess, although I do go to the Third for the Christmas entertainment. I give my box of candy away, too, so it's not for that I go."

She laughed. Her frivolity did not altogether please Brewster.

"Nevertheless, do come," he pleaded. "I shall choose a suitable lesson — something to interest you."

"Oh, I'd be interested enough if I came, but of course I sha'n't come."

Brewster started. He had no idea it was in woman to be so final. Now he realized that the obedient, vacillating women of his acquaintance did not convey the essential bewitchment of the sex. For him, Alice was a readjustment in femininity. Even her amiable defiance gave her power.

"I suppose you think I'm horrible," she continued, "but I'm sure I could never be a church goer, though I know many very nice folks who are."

"Don't you ever feel a longing to give yourself up to a higher power — to ask for solace that is beyond the ability of even your dear ones to give?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Brewster, I sometimes feel the need of such help. But I wouldn't think of going

BREWSTER ENTERS LISTS 189

to church to seek it, where there are so many people. I go to my room or to the woods — and by myself I oftentimes find that help. But aren't we getting tremendously sad?"

"We are redeemed by the sad things of life — death, misfortune, illness," said Brewster in a voice which carried with it the tones of the Sunday School teacher which he was. "When any of those things shall occur in your life —"

"Shall we return to the lawn?" Alice said before he had finished the sentence. "You see, I'll never become a pupil of yours, Mr. Brewster. I'm afraid we're so different."

The very successful strawberry festival of the Fourth Church was in its closing moments. The cash had been counted and the profits struck by a dozen bookkeepers sprinkled among committees. Along the curb young men in their Sunday best were waiting to pick lovely prizes among the home-goers.

Sheriff Lane met his daughter as she came out of a cloakroom.

"Alice, Mr. Brewster is going home with us — with you."

"Oh!"

"You want to treat him right — mind. He's the comin' man in this town."

190 **THE MAN WHO WON**

“Did you ask him to take me home?” she queried.

“Oh, no. He asked it himself.”

Alice Lane was not impressed.

CHAPTER XVII

POLITICS AND THE LADY

RALPH BREWSTER was impressed. The young lady's sharp-cut attributes appealed to him strongly. She awakened in him the conviction that his own life was indeed fallow. He considered the tributes and the honors conferred by men as nothing compared to the attainment of the affection of this seemingly unattainable girl. It amounted little to achieve the admiration of his fellows and then hear this sprite of a girl demolish all pride with her leveling judgment: "You see, I'll never become a pupil of yours, Mr. Brewster. I'm afraid we're so different." . . . But these words fired the man in Brewster. He was too unskilled in the ways of woman to note the finality of this repulse. In it he saw merely an uphill contest such as he fought daily.

Brewster bluntly asked if he might call. Alice thought of her father and consented. Moreover, she knew that Brewster did not call on any young women in Galeville, and, while she would not con-

fess to herself that she felt a slight touch of pride, Alice Lane consented and wondered how soon the news would spread among her friends.

The night of Mr. Brewster's call found Sheriff Lane arrayed in formal cutaway and a vexing pointed collar. Being so attired denoted to Alice's mind that her father intended to assist in welcoming the editor, and that the latter's visit was, in her father's opinion, of great importance.

Hampered by the white cuffs of state wear, the sheriff was tinkering with an ice cream freezer. Cake, selected by the sheriff's own solicitous judgment at a downtown baker's, lay, ready-cut, on the sideboard. In the sheriff's breast pocket were four cigars for which he had paid sufficient to rest his conscience while Brewster puffed. . . . And the glow of an election night was upon him.

When Mr. Brewster arrived the sheriff held him in the portico, there to release the first of the gift cigars. Then Alice and her mother appeared.

"'Scuse these loose flagstuns," said the sheriff, rocking his chair upon a slab. "The county can't 'ford nothin' better, I p'sume. Court House is crumblin' apart. I'm doin' the best I kin with the leetle I have. Jist look at that jail. How do you 'spect a sheriff kin git any credit with a buildin' like that onto his hands? No wonder once in a while people talks — mebbe you've heard inklin's.

POLITICS AND THE LADY 198

But who could do anything with sich an onsanitary hole — more'n I have? Could they, Mr. Brewster?"

"Certainly not," declared Brewster, as the sheriff surveyed him slyly. Detachedly, Alice Lane studied the roof of the portico.

"Pris'ners take sick very often on 'count of this reprehensible con-dition," resumed Sheriff Lane. "As soon's they do, up bobs certain po-litical tricksters and lays it on to the sheriff — you know how I mean — like. The sheriff is poor plumbing, I s'pose. The sheriff is brackish water, no doubt, and damp draughts, hey, Mr. Brewster? Oh, you could write a fine article 'bout it, if you was a mind to."

Brewster was seen to take a card from his vest pocket and to write a few words thereon.

"Draughts — did you say?" asked Mr. Brewster, with the calm, professional quizzing.

"Yes, crossin' through the cookhouse, and strikin' the tiers of cells — draughts. Yes, sir."

Alice was quite certain by the motion of Brewster's knuckles that he had written "cookhouse."

"Any deaths, say, from pneumonia?" queried Brewster.

"Yes, put that in too," the sheriff rejoined eagerly.

Brewster's knuckles bobbed industriously atop the

POLITICS AND THE LADY 195

"Really, I only dropped in to say 'how-do.' I must be going," said Harrison with his foot braced against the top step.

"Here—do take a chair," insisted Alice, tugging at his arm.

"Oh, no. I—"

"I'll be angry if you don't," she declared. For a moment he hesitated. "Come . . . I'm not urging you just to be polite," she continued. "Can't you see I'm carrying you to a chair?"

He laughed, and then sat down beside his rival.

Daughter had spoiled the choicest of planned strategy on the part of Seth Lane. Here was his requital for having donned the drum-tight cutaway and the sawing collar: nine o'clock and the nurtured guest of the evening disquieted by an interloper—a vital conversation embracing a defense of the jail management knocked endwise and Alice in ecstatic devotion to the uninvited visitor, while the young man of brilliance was flattened miserably by the plain preference for the other man.

"Eva said *probably next Tuesday*, if she could manage it," remarked Alice. Brewster knew not Eva nor Eva's projects. Sheriff Lane leered in disgust over such witless talk in the presence of men of affairs.

"The Consolidated Telephone is goin' to pass their five per cents this year," observed the sheriff,

196 THE MAN WHO WON

putting the conversation back into legitimate channels.

"Undoubtedly," opined Brewster.

"Will four be too early for you?" asked Alice, again addressing Harrison.

"Make it four-thirty," replied Harrison.

The sheriff's brows knitted and his glance was black.

"You haven't seen the jail, Mr. Brewster. S'pose we take a look 'round," he suggested.

"I'd be pleased to," remarked Mr. Brewster with unimpeachable politeness.

Having felt himself to be a brazen intruder, Harrison arose to depart. He was sorry for Brewster, driven jailward through his own monopolization of Alice Lane.

"I shouldn't have stayed," he apologized, looking at Brewster's empty chair.

"You were never more welcome . . . than tonight," she declared, with transparent meaning.

"Mr. Brewster is not a huge favorite then, I take it."

"You are not to speculate. . . . Do come again."

Harrison departed, quite dissatisfied with himself and with everything, for that matter. Leaving Alice Lane at nine-thirty with a rival in possession was no solacing thought to take homeward.

POLITICS AND THE LADY 197

In a few minutes Sheriff Lane's voice was heard filling the hallways with an orator's resonance. Directly he and Brewster were again seated within the family circle which Harrison's happy departure left in its pristine accord. New animation betsirred Mr. Brewster. When he spoke to Alice his eyes rested upon hers gleamingly. Sheriff Lane was pleased with himself and the world in general. Mrs. Lane signaled in family code that it was high time for ice cream.

"Excuse *us*," said the sheriff, patting out the creases in his cutaway, and withdrawing with the slight embarrassed guilt.

Alone with Alice, Brewster experienced a feeling of uneasiness, defensively his mind turned to the most obvious subject of discourse.

"It's an execrable jail," he said. "No wonder there is so much illness among the prisoners . . . Your father has been misjudged."

"Do you really think so?"

"Oh, yes. There is no doubt of it. I am going to do what I can to aid him to have his administration correctly understood."

Alice pondered a moment.

"Has the criticism been of such a disquieting nature as to make a formal defense necessary, Mr. Brewster? If not, wouldn't it be better not to stir up discussion?"

"Well . . . there has been criticism. But it has been of the nipping, fretting kind, not direct, smashing criticism. However, due explanations ought to be made in justice to your father, who, I may venture to say, is marked for higher honors. I shall see to it that his merit in the case is fittingly presented."

"You are very kind, Mr. Brewster."

"Oh, no. . . . I have watched Sheriff Lane for some years. He is the poor obscure boy come to something. You know, I am a former chore-boy, too. So I glory in his advancement. *We* must not permit an unfortunate misunderstanding in the public mind to stand in the way of his going higher."

Brewster spoke in a hushed, confidential tone that conveyed to himself, at least, a sense of a nearer relation than anything that had occurred in their previous rather frigid encounters. Alice thought, however, that Brewster did not harbor a smallest suspicion of the grossness of the evil which rested upon Seth Lane's official conduct.

Brewster always seemed to provoke a heaviness of spirit in Alice, to weigh her down with the gravity of the matters which he brought to her attention. Hitherto he had occupied but little of her thought. To-night he had grown in importance — was looming forth as an inevitable genius of help.

POLITICS AND THE LADY 199

Yet, Alice began to wonder if his interest was not a planned advance upon her intimacy. She looked at him as he sat in his chair, an erect, severe figure; in appearance a paragon of homely virtues.

In her preferential treatment of Harrison tonight, she admitted her neglect of Brewster's modest claims to her consideration. But then Harrison — was Harrison. . . . Still, she turned to Brewster repentantly.

"Won't you come over some evening for cards?" she asked. Her conjuring with her little charms was exquisite.

"Most assuredly. It is very good of you," he said.

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The visitor had gone, gladdened as never before. Sheriff Lane was gathering in the portico rockers for the night. Last vestiges of ice cream and marble cake had been taken to the kitchen. Brewster's cigar ash, heaped neatly on a tray, hovered — the ghost of the evening passed — over the scene. Clearing away the tray again reminded the sheriff of a fact that had been in his mind most of the evening.

"Look here, Alice," he said, fitting a knee into the arm of a chair. "How'd you treat this Mr. Brewster t'night, eh? Nice, didn't you? . . . Set down here and let me talk to you."

200 THE MAN WHO WON

She took the chair proffered; he stood beside her, tapping his foot.

"I never saw such a chump as you," he went on. "What are you botherin' with this Harrison for? He's only takin' up your time to amuse hisself in this dull town."

"Indeed — is he?" she said proudly. "Well, he drove all the way over from Telford City to amuse himself, if that's all he —"

"Bosh! The feller is an idler. Playin' at newspaper editin'. Mr. Brewster kin edit rings around him. Why, he's a flunked lawyer, he is. Who's it told me — Attorney Black."

"I didn't know that. He told me he'd studied law, but had given it up."

"No matter," replied Lane impatiently. "What's he 'mount to, anyway? He's got a newspaper on his hands that costs his father a nice penny every week to keep goin'. He's got nuthin' hisself. Everything's his father's, and him married ag'in to a young wife. What kind of a marryin' match would this feller Harrison be for you?"

"Is that all you think of — marryin'?"

Seth Lane snorted in his vexation. His big jaw trembled as he groped for words.

"Well — for Heaven's sake!" he roared. "Is that all I think of? Have I been raisin' you all these years for to be a-thinkin' of anything else?"

POLITICS AND THE LADY 201

You'd best be devotin' a leetle thinkin' to it, too."

His warmth of expression had not communicated itself to her. She sat gently rocking, observing his vexation as a thing of interest,—and alert to his strokes of argument.

"All young men who pay calls are not thinking of marriage, father. Mr. Harrison probably doesn't."

"Ain't that what I said before?" he demanded jubilantly. "That he's comin' here only for pastime. I said it and you contradicted it."

"Then have it that way; he's coming here for pastime, as you call it. I'm satisfied."

"But I ain't. 'Stead of you mincin' 'round him so pretty and sweetlike, I want you to treat Mr. Brewster more civil and con-siderate. *He's the man for you.*"

"Indeed . . . to get you into Congress. I understand."

"Look here: Harrison's father will be against me tooth 'n nail when I run."

"Quite natural. His politics demand that he should. . . . At any rate whether you do or don't go to Congress, my visitors shall be strictly out of politics after eight o'clock in the evening."

"Alice, you go to bed—hear me?—this instant."

CHAPTER XVIII

CORONER WILMOT'S FRIENDSHIP

A MAN had been drowned in the Maugatee River within the corporate limits of Galeville. To garner the facts for the next day's issue of the *Eagle*, Jack Harrison on a Friday evening stopped at the undertaking and embalming parlors of Smith Bowers. The body was in charge of Coroner Rufus Wilmot, who had discarded his military coat and baggage-master's hat of jail duty for the more somber garb of a coroner. Citizens were flocking in to see the body, and refusing to leave, there was a great deal of crowding and chatter and laughter.

Smith Bowers' outer parlor was reserved for relatives and friends of the deceased. The inner parlor was a lounging place for the satellites of the burying craft — coach drivers, deputy coroners, pall bearers on call, as well as a few laymen who came evenings to hear mortuary tales spun by these seasoned spectators of misery.

In an adjoining room the dead man was on exhibition. His body, covered with a sheet, reposed on a tilted board, the head raised higher than the

WILMOT'S FRIENDSHIP 208

feet. Here it was that Coroner Rufus Wilmot swelled in the pride of his office — he, the man in whom the Commonwealth lodged the power to preside over this momentous scene. Rufus asked no greater Fame than this.

“Gentlemen,” said Rufus, addressing the throng, “there was no signs of vi’lence upon this here man’s body, although one laig was bruised from strikin’ again’ a rock. Accordin’ to my calcerlations, based onto two terms in office, I should say he was in water ’tween twenty-four and thirty-six hours, although medical science”—here he halted to permit of better assimilation of the clinical touch—“kinnot fix the exact time with certainty. The deceased here laying evidently throwed hisself into the Maugatee River with intention and aim for to commit suicide, undoubt’ly bein’ out of work by the downhearted look of his features, besides only fourteen cents in his clothes. Gentlemen, I should say if I was asked on the stand to give my perffessional ’pinion, that he was a bricklayer by occupation, and —”

“How could you tell that, Rufe?” came a query from some one in the crowd.

“Well,” said Rufus, “there are certain little signs that guides us — certain signs.” His manner was decidedly mysterious as if to imply that he was withholding a rare trade secret.

204 THE MAN WHO WON

"Kin you tell if he's married or single — by them signs?" asked the same voice.

"See here, Hen Miller," blazed Rufus in indignation, "do you take these here perceedings as vaudeville? Or is death sacrid?"

The assemblage cast upon Hen Miller a look of conglomerate scorn. Miller, squelched by acclamation, shuffled out.

At this juncture Constable Eb Linton walked in, and straightway examined the dead man with a telling air of expertness.

"*Rigor mortis*," said Linton to the coroner in a confidential way.

"Oh, yes; for quite some hours," returned Wilmot.

The spectators glanced admiringly at the coroner. Eb Linton, thus encouraged, bent over the dead man.

"Liver trouble there — skin," noted the constable.

"Over-drinkin', undoubtedly," said the coroner.

"Undoubt'ly. . . . Englishman, wouldn't you say?"

"'Merican, more like," said Coroner Wilmot.

"Don't think so."

"There's where we differ," replied the coroner.

"Finger nails shows fair amount of breedin'. A clerk likely," continued Constable Linton.

WILMOT'S FRIENDSHIP 205

"Never no clerk — him," said Wilmot. "Clerks wears garters. This feller had none."

"All's I say is, you use a diff'runt *system* than me," declared the constable with noticeable sarcasm. "The system I use is detection and conviction — results. Hem!"

"Mr. Linton, you are only used to court cases. Anything above 'trocious 'sault and battery comes outer your hands into mine. So we'll excuse you for not knowin' more about *pure* vi'lence. . . . Anyhow, a constable is only the sheriff's errand boy. But the coroner — he is the only man in the county who kin arrest the sheriff. Gentlemen, anything I may have said in your hearin' pertainin' to this case is not to be taking into consideration should any of you be summoned on the coroner's jury, nor durst your 'pinion be formerlated by anything you read in our newspaper press, of which I notice there is a repersen'ative in our present midst — how do you do, Mr. Harrison!"

Harrison, thus suddenly singled out for public attention, endeavored to hide in the crowd, but at the coroner's words the crowd clove itself in two and left Harrison standing, alone and clear, a mark for scrutiny and comment.

"Gentlemen — Mr. Harrison, new partner of the Galeville *Iggle*. Won't you step closter and view the remains?" said Coroner Wilmot, taking Harri-

206 THE MAN WHO WON

son by the arm. The latter permitted himself to be led to the side of the dead man.

“Sat’d’y’s issher of the *Iggle*, is it?” asked Wilmot. On Harrison’s nod, the coroner proceeded: “Well, then, I will say that this is a case of suicide with traces of hard drinkin’ and no employment s’far as my investigations has gone — say that. . . . Er — would you kinely step to one side for a moment, please?”

The coroner drew him to a corner, the crowd having complacently made way for them, knowing that this was to be intimate, delicate consultation between two very professional fellows.

“Mr. Harrison — could you use this?” Wilmot fished out of his pocket a typewritten sheet, a glance at which convinced Harrison that it was a flattering biographical sketch of the coroner, crediting him with unpossessed qualities and wildly impossible achievements. Accompanying the sketch was an old-fashioned photograph showing the coroner in a coat with braided edges, and a puff tie that had formed but an imperfect junction with a collar denominated as “minstrel” style. However, the photograph was superior to the biography in that it was truthful.

“Mr. Harrison, I was goin’ to ask you to use this write-up piece about me along with the account of the suicide. You see how ’tis, next fall I’m goin’

WILMOT'S FRIENDSHIP 207

to run for county commish'ner, and I got to git my name up good and strong the next few months. The *Star* won't use it; they got a pick on me — Jim Slaver's death. I went to bed and forgot to telephone to the *Star* about Jim takin' mercury tablets for incompat'bility with his wife, and dyin'. It was of a Friday and the *Iggle* got the yarn exclusive, and now the *Star* won't state nuthin' about my prominence."

As a matter of policy, Harrison decided to use the article, after toning down some of the coroner's performances to the range of probability. The coroner, warming over the good tidings, launched into a fuller self-identification, making it known to Harrison that, in addition to his official activities, he was in the life insurance business and sold town lots at Midwood Heights; absolutely nothing down; superior air; handy to everything.

Harrison walked to the door, considerably enlightened as to the purposes for which Rufus Wilmot deemed himself placed on earth.

"Say, Mr. Harrison, if I git any deaths on Thursdays or after, I'll hold 'em over for your Sat'd'y paper. The *Star* 'll git no deaths off me 'cept what 'ud be too stale fer you to use."

"I'm obliged, coroner."

"And I thank you for this little favor," he concluded, indicating the sheet curled in Harrison's

208 THE MAN WHO WON

hand. "I don't know that I kin do much to recipercate but — who kin tell? I may be able to do somethin' fer you some day over to the Court House — *the family part of the buildin'* — eh, Mr. Harrison?"

And then Harrison remembered that Wilmot was the night jailer.

CHAPTER XIX

AN ALLIANCE WITH THE BLATCHFORDS

WITH their married life lengthening with the weeks, the thought grew upon Mrs. Edward Harrison that heroes are unsatisfactory individuals after all. Association with Edward Harrison was beginning to show that he was quite commonplace at times. Not, however, in the office. Then, he was a titan of a man. But Mrs. Harrison not being in a position to see him handle precincts and wards, or deliver ultimatums to banks and boards, judged him solely by what she heard him say and do at home. Her quondam hero stood stripped on the flaws of the average man.

At home, at the table, on the veranda, by the evening lamp, Mrs. Harrison began to develop the conviction that Edward was of the Storridge and the Clyde caste. Edward was for minutes at a time a stolid, smoking, uncommunicative creature. These were the moments when his thoughts were churning city politics, deals, counter-strokes. Such contemplative moods, following upon the rigors of a

day, gave Edward Harrison a sense of domesticity with his pretty wife sitting near to speak when his mood called for words. But his pretty wife would stare at the wall and wonder where there was any romance in marrying a self-engrossed celebrity. Not that she was tired of her bargain. In Edward Harrison there was much that any woman might admire. There was a masculinity, a severity about him that was impressive; it constituted a part of his power over mankind. And he had his tender periods,—crudely so, but manly and direct. Disappointment came to Mrs. Harrison when she failed to find the finished lover. He was hopelessly practical and humdrum in his leisure moments, even if he did possess the looks of an actor and the appearance of wooing youth,—attractions which enchanted her as Emily Graydon.

He was a man of affairs who brought his problems home. Their evenings had not been blithe and youthful; they had been evenings for the middle-aged.

Marriage for Emily had seen the crashing of some high hopes, and brought about adaptation to prosy conditions.

No, she was not tired of the bargain. She had merely come to the point where she did not count herself so wonderfully lucky. To her notion, Edward Harrison did not have so much the better of

the match as she had deemed he had on the day they slipped into the parsonage of the Rev. Theodore Bennett.

The outward tranquillity of their existence underwent its first disturbance one evening when Edward came home with an invitation to attend the Storridges' lawn fête, a Saturday afternoon and evening affair which annually, had the public peering through fence palings.

Edward Harrison was quite radiant over this invitation, considering that he and his wife had been spending some very glum evenings recently upon the veranda with not a person to see, and Mrs. Harrison the possessor of hangers upon hangers of unworn gowns. But Mrs. Harrison received the news with a vexed expression. The Storridges had become revolting to her. Upon the mere mention of their name would come sharp remembrance of H. Storridge's machinist's mien — the fleck of grime on his cheek, that had helped to make hideous her Saturday at the Country Club.

"The Storridges! . . . No, we'll not go. They're intolerable," she said, with a petulance that was new to him.

"But we must go, Emily," he replied softly.

"No, indeed, we'll not." The words came hotly from her.

Harrison puffed calmly on his cigar. In nowise

212 THE MAN WHO WON

did he betray surprise. Her manner was defiant. He intuitively felt that her vexation took root in something besides this squabble over the Storridges. Was it that Emily had not found happiness in her new life? Still he puffed calmly.

"We're going," he said at length. His words were like barred steel against flesh and blood. But her mettle was unshaken.

"You're going then, but I'm not."

"Why, Emily!"

"I don't care. I just can't stand those people — the Storridges and their cronies. I'd rather stay home on the veranda, *bad as that is*, than spend an evening —"

She stopped, fluttering and unnerved. Wisps of smoke were curling out of her husband's mouth with the even regularity of his breathing. His iron calm was unbreakable.

"The evenings have been rather dull, Emily, I admit," he said in a tone as cheerily moderate as if he were broaching an entirely new subject. "But then we haven't endeavored to get around yet. We've been sort of getting acquainted with each other. Short acquaintance — short engagement. . . . But later on, when we get to going about —"

"Going about? And with whom shall we go about? The Clydes and the McClintocks? Do you know what I think of them? I think they're very

shabby people with all their money. Any one may meet them. Mr. Clyde belongs to lodges and things, and they have 'feeds' for members at his home — clerks and bookkeepers and eminently obscure folks like that. Oh! such names when you read them in the newspapers: 'J. Burke, L. Himmel, G. Spondil' — that is a sample of Mr. Clyde's lodge brothers. And the McClintocks — Mrs. McClintock's euchre club plays at the home of one member who lives over a grocery store. Euchre — heavens! Would you have me intimate with such people?"

"Why . . . what's the matter with them?"

"There's nothing the matter with them, Edward, but there are more congenial people here — for me — are there not?"

"Well! . . . Who, for instance?"

"The Throckmortons — the Guildfords."

"I don't know them."

"You know the Hillarys and the Motleys, Edward."

"Yes, I know them — the men, at least."

"You told me that Mr. Blatchford himself asked you to get him on the board of the Pioneer Bank — and you did it."

"Yes, I did it."

"Then Blatchford's your man."

"My man? How?"

214 THE MAN WHO WON

"To give us our start. Oh, you can do it, Edward. You've accomplished about everything in Telford City that you've tried."

"I know, but that's been with men. You see, the gates to Laurel Avenue are guarded by the women. I don't know *them*."

"No, but you know their husbands. If you started in to squeeze the Laurel Avenue crowd in their tenderest spots, don't you suppose you could make them yelp? Now, then, couldn't you?"

She was smiling good-humoredly with her head tilted teasingly to the side.

"U-mm! I could knock Blatchford off the directorate next election, for one thing," he answered, drawing his eyelids a trifle closer together. "Let's see. . . . A police raid would bring to light some of the Gordons' best rentals. H-mm! . . . And the Cromwells—I could revive that old indictment against Stephen Cromwell that I had the district attorney pigeonhole. Guess I could reach the whole bunch of them. They're all in street railway stock. I could take half a million out of their pockets at the next meeting of Council."

"Great Scott! How could you do that?"

"By compelling the company to pay its legal share of street repairs and snow removal for the past four years, and to have its property assessments jacked up to a *fair* figure."

"Then the company hasn't been paying these things?"

"No, it hasn't been made to. . . . Emily, *you're going in*, that's all. I'll start with Blatchford tomorrow."

"I don't think you'll find it necessary to go a step farther than Blatchford. You don't realize your own power."

"I'm a modest man." He smiled serenely and lit another cigar.

"Edward, you're a dear."

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"Hello, Blatch."

"Hello, Harrison."

Sering Blatchford, whom Harrison had asked by telephone to drop in some time when he was "handy in the neighborhood," had found it convenient to be in the neighborhood within forty minutes. Jack Harrison was excused by his father. On his way out for cigarettes Jack vainly tried to dovetail the great secrecy attaching to Mr. Blatchford's visit with some existent affair of finance or politics.

In his cutaway frock and striped worsted trousers Mr. Blatchford appeared as though he should be at tea uptown. He gave the impression by his clothing and his demeanor that business with him was but a pastime — not to be followed for the sheer dollars, but a sporting pursuit for gentlemen who detest

216 THE MAN WHO WON

idleness. Thus he went in strongly for directorates, and for delicate deals in stocks and insurance.

"Blatchford, you haven't met my wife," began Harrison.

"No, I'd like to — immensely."

"You shall. That's what I'm getting at. Blatchford, Mrs. Harrison is new here, as you probably know. She hasn't formed any social ties as yet, and I want her to start right. She is very well connected. The Arnolds — you've heard of them — the railroad people; her grand-uncle was Cyrus Arnold."

"Very fine people," remarked Mr. Blatchford, endeavoring to convince himself that he had somewhere heard of Cyrus Arnold. His directorship in the Pioneer Bank carried convictions to his flagging memory.

"Fine people?" repeated Mr. Harrison. "Why, sir, the very best. So she naturally feels she'd like to associate with the best here."

Mr. Blatchford bowed. He understood perfectly.

"Suppose," said Mr. Blatchford, striving not to lay too great emphasis upon the proposal he was about to make, "suppose I have Mrs. Blatchford introduce Mrs. Harrison. Would that do?"

"It's the very thing. Blatchford, you're all right."

"Harrison, so are you. I'll call you up to-

morrow and let you know what Mrs. B. and I have arranged. It will be suitable to you, I'm sure."

"You're all right, Blatchford."

"Good-day, Harrison."

CHAPTER XX

OUTGROWING OLD FRIENDS

MRS. SERING BLATCHFORD gave a tea to introduce Mrs. Harrison. Not a crowded event by any means, since a number of the invited families had departed for their summer homes. Against those who came there was not a word of reproach to be said on the score of social position. Present were no *nouveaux riches*, no new names. Here was wealth that had not come over the despised merchandising counter later than 1880 — the running years purifying the original taint as a river purifies itself by its flow. It was the aristocracy of Telford City that came to Mrs. Blatchford's home to view Mrs. Edward Harrison's bid for eligibility.

Within a short time after the guests had arrived all doubts that Telford City society was in any manner superior to her were removed from Mrs. Harrison's mind. The inadequacy of these people was startling! There were a few dressers of note, and one or two real beauties. The majority of the people, she thought, were hopelessly without distinction. She derived encouragement from their shortcom-

OUTGROWING OLD FRIENDS 219

ings. The contrast with what she considered her own points of attractiveness incited her to register her merit more pronouncedly — that is, to herself. She was gay, brilliant, enrapturing; she dazzled right and left.

Mr. Blatchford looked in for a short time to see that his cherished project for repaying Edward Harrison should not go awry. He had not met Mrs. Harrison before, and three minutes of her blandishments convinced him that the railroad Arnolds must have been somebodies.

The general opinion seemed to be that she was a person of very unusual attainments, and that while Edward Harrison (distinguished as he admittedly was) was tainted with Telford City bourgeois origin, marriage with such an attractive woman as Emily Graydon had redeemed him for the high caste of the city.

Mrs. Harrison was “in,” socially, and with her, Edward Harrison, by the grace of her progress.

“Now, Edward, we must surely go to Siatuxit Beach for the summer. There is no other way out of it. All of them are going. Is it much of a place?”

Edward Harrison was not particularly pleased with this new notion. He had never summered away from Telford City. It was his belief that he dare not leave a proxy city government behind. Of

220 THE MAN WHO WON

course he trusted his lieutenants — as long as he kept them under his eye.

"Siatuxit? It's a fair place. Why not go to a hotel for a few weeks," he suggested.

"I couldn't entertain at a hotel. We must have a cottage, Edward — really!"

"A cottage, and here it is nearly July first."

"Colonel Sloan's cottage is still vacant, Mrs. Tanner told me."

"Colonel Sloan's!" he exclaimed. "Good Lord, it's the best along the coast." His real meaning was that the rental price would be enormous.

"Good. Then we'll have the best," quietly answered Mrs. Harrison.

"I — I hadn't been thinking of going away this summer, Emily."

"You don't have to 'go away,' as you say. Can't you come down every evening? It's only forty miles. Oh, we must go, now that I've triumphed. Why, just think, I'm to go shopping to-morrow with Mrs. Wrighter."

"Mrs. Wrighter? Phew!" Mr. Harrison's complacent cigar began to fire red.

"Yes, she is going to show me where I can get a hat — almost Paris — for almost nothing. It does beat everything how these Telford City women with gobs of money back of them are continually hunting for cheap Johns and slaughter sales."

OUTGROWING OLD FRIENDS 221

"You go right along with Mrs. Wrighter," Harrison said with keen interest. "I want to meet Wrighter himself. I've never got to him. Going shopping with Mrs. Wrighter, eh? I guess we've landed. Well, well. . . . I suppose I'll have to see Colonel Sloan to-morrow about that cottage."

Next day Harrison's cheque went over Colonel Sloan's desk for the first month's rental of "Seacrest," the stucco and green tile Moorish edifice built upon the rocks at Siatuxit. Word went by telephone to Mrs. Harrison of the success of the transaction. Immediately she put in motion her plans for departure. Her present cook was an impossibility for what she believed to be the exigencies of Siatuxit, being unable to prepare even passable game pâtes or cheese *fondue* — Mrs. Harrison's especial delights. Consequently a new cook, versed in grilled courses, *soufflés*, and cheeses, was obtained. Additional maids must be hired. Within three days the entire ménage was to be moved; also the napery, crystal and silver, notwithstanding the fact that the Sloan place had plated stuff and pressed glassware that would answer the demands of summer hospitality. Mrs. Harrison decreed that even the nuptial plate, to the very tureens and compotiers, should be packed. Silver *épergnes* from her Grandfather Arnold were likewise included. All this signified that Mrs. Harrison was going in for dinners of state

222 THE MAN WHO WON

and ambitious entertainment. The servants foresaw that Siatuxit was to be slavery, not vacation.

Later in the day, Mrs. Wrighter came over for the shopping tour.

Before her marriage, Mrs. Wrighter lived in the Middle West. Her family owned several wire mills, and marrying her to iron mills was a matter of business with which she was in entire accord. She had never really loved Mr. Wrighter, but she had never lost her respect for her husband's grasp upon the industry. This was a pre-nuptial admiration and it was still endured to make their union a matter of even-flowing amity. It happened that Mr. Wrighter and Papa in the Middle West pooled their purchases of material, and coördinated their sales departments. It pleased Mrs. Wrighter to think that her passing from Papa to Mr. Wrighter caused this excellent business management. Mr. Wrighter was bald, studious and lacked humor. Mrs. Wrighter was practical, thrifty and possessed a canny understanding of business. They lived ideally at arm's length, without tenderness, yet without friction.

"Won't you bring Mr. Wrighter to see us before we go?" asked Mrs. Harrison, as they settled down comfortably in Mrs. Wrighter's landaulet.

"Mr. Wrighter! I can't budge him evenings. He scans blue prints as you'd read Dumas."

OUTGROWING OLD FRIENDS 228

"But some evening —"

"Mr. Wrighter knows what he is going to do with every one of his evenings between now and Easter. He doesn't go away summers — on account of his blue prints. Imagine!"

"Mrs. Wrighter — how about you spending a week or two with us at 'Seacrest'?"

Mrs. Wrighter thought for a moment before she answered.

"I could do it, no doubt. . . . Mrs. H., I will."

Mrs. Harrison's feelings were essentially elevated. To be sponsor for the renowned Mrs. Wrighter of the iron mills was an incredible feat for one but twenty-four hours within Telford City's inner ring of social celebrities.

She was filled with pent-up joy when she greeted her husband that evening. At once he inquired what she had done in the direction of bringing Mr. Wrighter within the grasp of his acquaintance.

"I haven't landed him — exactly," she said, with a readable grimace, "but Mrs. Wrighter is going to spend a fortnight with me at 'Seacrest.' How's that?"

"Emily," he replied, with his cold eyes now glistening, "I think 'Seacrest' will be a good investment after all."

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224 THE MAN WHO WON

Matilda Mulls' appearance at eleven o'clock the next morning was a matter extremely disquieting to Mrs. Harrison, whose aims and interests had outgrown the Mulls family. A maid conducted Matilda to Mrs. Harrison's room, into which she rushed and threw her arms about her friend's neck.

"Heavens, Emily, I saw the papers! I didn't even know you *knew* the Blatchfords and that crowd. When did you get to meet them? . . . I know — Mr. Harrison fixed it. He can fix anything, Pa says. Say, Emily, are there going to be any more teas?"

"Oh, no; we're going away Saturday to Siatuxit Beach."

"Lord!"

"We have Colonel Sloan's cottage."

"Heavens 'n earth! And we have arranged to go to Atlantic City again. Such luck! Don't you think I might — well —"

"I'll write you. I'll let you know," replied Mrs. Harrison, politely evasive. Matilda unbuttoned her gloves thoughtfully and sat down upon the chaise longue.

"You couldn't let me know just when you could have me down?" asked Matilda, somewhat falteringly.

"No. . . . You see, we are head over heels just now. And we are to have so much company. Mrs.

OUTGROWING OLD FRIENDS 225

Wrighter is going to spend quite some time with us."

"Mrs. John S. Wrighter, for heaven's sake?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever! . . . Emily, can you do anything for me? Here I've gotten into everything — the Country Club, the District Nurse Guild, the Charity Ball tableaux, Red Cross — just to run the chance of being asked to one weeny little tea, or to somebody's 'day,' and I haven't advanced an inch in my six years out. And Pa keeps on buying me clothes fit to kill dukes. What for? To dazzle some very respectable clerks and business chaps from downtown, who haven't a thing to offer a girl but their prospects. Just think of keeping a drawing-room open for such a herd! It's a dreadful waste of my time and my clothes. But what can I do? I haven't known a soul who could help me. But now that I have you, I shouldn't find it so very hard to get *somewhere*, should I, Emily?"

"Well, Matilda, you know I'm not irrevocably 'in' myself. How do I know what *they'll* do with me?"

"Ah, but you're Emily — there's no downing you. . . . Don't you think you could talk me up cautiously to these people — kind of introduce my name and give me a little push ahead verbally so that later on when you are ready to launch me se-

226 THE MAN WHO WON

riously, they'd know about me? I don't want to be launched green, you know."

"I could say a good word — certainly."

"But will you?" inquired Matilda, with doubt expressed in her voice.

"I'll do what I can. . . . But you must understand that I can't guarantee anything with these people. Should I, a newcomer, dictate —"

"I'm afraid, Emily, you're — you're not going to try. . . . If you only knew how anxious I am for this thing. . . . Remember, we brought you to Telford City. I hope you won't be angry for my mentioning it . . . but we've had so many things in common, haven't we?"

"Oh, yes. . . . Well, let's talk about something else, my dear. . . . You have a very pretty shade of silk in that motor coat, Matilda."

CHAPTER XXI

EMBARRASMENTS

SIATUXIT BEACH jutted into the Atlantic, and received full-face the prevailing southwesterly breezes during the summer months. Along the ocean boulevard were the palatial hotels casting shame upon their competitors of aging wood and homely monotonous piazzas situated on the back streets.

Beyond the hotels along the shore were the summer homes. There could be seen houses of granite, of stucco, and of wood brilliantly fashioned into turrets, towers, dormers and balconies,—all of these with garden hedges hewn, as if marble, into globes and blocks and fantastic walls of green, bordering lawns of clover grass, thick growing and velvety. These summer houses of wealth spoke of old age lolling healthily, of youth celestially reaping love and gayety, of childhood in a fairy life. These cottages were monuments to a coal baron, a banker, an insurance king, a welder of stores linked across the continent,—all come to the seaside to gather one more golden tribute from Existence. Success here took its fill of ease.

The Moorish fortress with gay flapping awnings is "Seacrest." Through the gateway passed the Harrison car and within one could see Mrs. Harrison discoursing pleasantly with Mrs. Charles Musgrave, from Telford City, and a neighboring cottager on the sands. The car proceeded along the ocean boulevard.

"*That's* William Graham, of New York, the railroad man," said Mrs. Musgrave, thus identifying for Mrs. Harrison's benefit a huge residence of stone overlooking the sea.

"Mr. Graham, eh!" repeated Mrs. Harrison. "Shall we meet him?"

"Hardly. Haven't you heard? I suppose not — being new to the place. Well . . . Mr. Graham belongs to the millionaire bunch — Pittsburg steel and Chicago beef and Philadelphia banking. You'll see them, sure enough, but I doubt if you'll meet any of them — though you may. Nobody out of Telford City ever pried into that set. Our crowd is all right to preserve caste in Telford City, but here on the boulevard we shine only in a small zone. The big fellows simply won't have us. We're too inland, too countrified. Yes, too cheap. There's Cyrus Whitmarsh — that yellow cottage. He brings his meat all the way from Telford City every night because the meat shops here are three cents higher to the pound. Take the Corsons — the

thatched bungalow with the freak chimney. Sam Corson himself waters the lawn before dinner every night — shirt sleeves and all that. Says it's good for his health. It is. But it's bad for his daughter Cecilia's advancement. Pretty girl, too. Eddie Peaseley of the New York Peaseleys, liked her immensely two years ago. She might have had a chance if old Corson had only hired a gardener."

"And Corson is rich, too," commented Mrs. Harrison.

"Yes. . . . *We* have the money, but we either don't know how or won't spend it. I'm afraid the Yankee thrift is still in our blood. Why, Elwood Thane contends that a two-dollar steak and a dollar-fifty lobster is robbery, and he told them so at the Clarendon, the hotel on the beach front. He says it's justice, not frugality, that animates him. Fancy justice in an *à la carte*. We're cheap, Mrs. Harrison, back-country cheap."

"And that isn't all," continued Mrs. Musgrave for the further enlightenment of the eager listener. "Some of our Telford City people object to the New York-Pittsburg crowd on moral grounds — too fast, they say; too much pepper in their summer doings; too many divorcées fresh from newspaper ink. Such objectors ought to summer at Ocean Grove — Religion by the Sea. How can we be

élite and not make allowances for human nature?"

They were riding past the Clarendon, redolent of gay dining and a rapacious *carte*. Mr. Thane's two-dollar beefsteak flashed upon Mrs. Harrison's thoughts. Simultaneously Mrs. Musgrave pointed out the foreign motor of the illustrious William Graham of New York, in which were Mr. Graham and some dressy, chatting ladies. When the Graham car whizzed by the women stared at Mrs. Harrison and her companion. A pang went through Mrs. Harrison's heart. What availed her triumph in Telford City when she was to suffer the mortification of inferiority at Siatuxit?

Mrs. Harrison decided that she had not spent a very pleasant morning with Mrs. Musgrave.

Jack Harrison, who had been coming to Siatuxit from Telford City by motor on Sunday mornings to gain a mental freshening after the stress of his week-ends in the *Eagle* office, strolled into the Clarendon to look over the crowd.

A light touch on his arm — Muriel Clayton stood beside him, smiling. With her was her counterpart with twenty years added — her mother.

"Glad to see you, Jack. My mother — Mr. Harrison. How do you like your new cottage? Wonderfully well, I suppose."

"Oh, yes."

"My mother and I are coming to call soon," promised Muriel.

"Do," said Jack, wondering if she meant it.

"We heard yesterday of your getting Colonel Sloan's place. No doubt Mrs. Harrison will entertain extensively. She is very, very much talked of since the Blatchford reception. Society has quite taken her up. Is she going to give anything?"

"A dance, next week."

"Won't that be nice! Have you heard who are to be asked?"

"Oh, no."

"None of our set, I don't suppose — unless you should request it especially. You could do that, couldn't you?"

"Undoubtedly — that is, I could request it," Harrison replied, somewhat flustered.

"Oh, yes, but a request from you would amount almost to a command. Your step-mother surely wouldn't ignore you. Must you go now?"

"See that chap over there by the rail?" asked Harrison. "I think I know him. Egbert Eldridge — went to prep school with him. By George! I'm sure it's Egbert. I'll see you later, Muriel."

Harrison, relieved, fled to the side of Egbert Eldridge, a chum not seen for several years.

Eldridge was captivated by this meeting, which he insisted upon properly celebrating in the café. Eg-

282 THE MAN WHO WON

bert Eldridge always was sentimental — a celebrant of the smallest event! Harrison soon found that he had to call a halt to Eldridge's efforts of commemoration.

Coming outdoors, they met Eldridge's sister. Her season at Siatuxit had been rather dull. Brilliant eligibles were scarce this year. Hence she looked with some interest upon Jack Harrison who possessed an expression of maturity, a poise which was a relief from the "boyishness" of the youths with whom she had been inflicted for some days past. Instantly she was much taken up with the idea that Harrison might — who could tell? — be *her summer*. She presumed from the cordiality of her brother's introduction that there was no question of Harrison's eligibility to participate in the doings of her very exclusive friends. Harrison, for his part, called to mind that the Eldridges were high-toppers among the dominant fashionable families of Siatuxit. Egbert Eldridge himself, had not a thought of Jack Harrison socially gauged,—only of Jack Harrison the second form boy of Hitt School. Harrison surveyed the sister with a curious eye. He saw a girl with large blue eyes, a high-boned, *superior* sort of a nose, a complexion made dark by the sun, a fine figure enhanced by a loose flannel dress.

"Where are you, Mr. Harrison?" asked Miss

Eldridge, hiding a great deal of personal concern beneath her polite query.

"We're at 'Seacrest'—Colonel Sloan's place."

"Oh—I know," blurted out Eldridge. "So it's your father whom we read about. I hadn't connected you up, old chap. You've been mute about yourself. Charlotte, this fellow is modest; he still blushes. Say, Harrison, I wish my father was in politics. I'd like a crack at the game."

Evidently Eldridge admired the senior Mr. Harrison.

"Won't you jump into our car? We'll show you our place," pleaded Eldridge.

"Yes, indeed," added Miss Eldridge. "Please do."

"Well—not to-day, thank you," replied Harrison. "I'll run over some time."

"Come to-night," urged Eldridge. "We'll have you meet some people."

"I'm going back to the city this afternoon. . . . Sorry."

"Well, come when you can," said Eldridge.

"Thanks."

Charlotte Eldridge, watching Jack Harrison walk down the Clarendon steps, felt an admiration for his manliness. She waxed more and more bitter against "boys" who come a-courting.

"Egbert," she said, swinging her head from side

to side in emphasis, "can't you get Mr. Harrison over?"

"You heard me try, didn't you?"

"Yes, I heard you," she said with a pout.

Luncheon at "Seacrest" was scarcely over when an ominous looking village hack, with a tawny fringed top and antique curved mudguards, rattled up to the door. The driver, part fisherman and part Jehu, was in vest and shirt sleeves. Jack Harrison, glancing through a window, made out Muriel Clayton and her mother, coming to pay their promised call. Mrs. Harrison, upstairs, was still unaware of this honor.

As befitted a good-humored young man with no social prejudices, Harrison came forward and welcomed the visitors. Possibly Mrs. Harrison would have been *out* to them had their cards been sent up.

"Take chairs. Mrs. Harrison will be down directly," said Harrison, dispatching a maid for his step-mother.

"The view is grand, perfectly grand," remarked Muriel. "Over there is the Graham estate. Such rose bushes!"

"Grand places these people have," commented Mrs. Clayton, shaking her head sadly. Harrison darted a look at her. Up to this moment he had not

taken Mrs. Clayton into account. For the first time it struck him that she was as "under-done" as her daughter was "over-nice." Harrison also held the notion that she had chewing gum concealed in her mouth.

Mrs. Harrison entered the room and was presented. It was not cordiality but a stiffened imitation that she presented. As the Claytons were immured in the rear of the house, away from the assessing eyes of the patrician boulevard, she was not particularly angry at the call.

"We heard you were here," began Mrs. Clayton, "and I said to Muriel, 'Muriel, we must go over and see Mrs. Harrison. What'll she think?' Neighbors home, neighbors here, I say."

"Ah!" put in Mrs. Harrison — an impartial acknowledgment of this pretty sentiment.

"'Maybe,' said I to Muriel, 'Mrs. Harrison is better acquainted than we are at the Clarendon, and might introduce us to people we'd never meet at a hotel — nice cottage people down here for the whole summer, with their own cars and things. Mrs. Harrison would certainly not mix us in with *any trash!*' That's what I said to Muriel."

Mrs. Clayton's chin rolled just a trifle. Harrison was sure of the chewing gum.

Glancing at his step-mother, Harrison beheld on her countenance an expression of surprise and an-

ger which he immediately connected with the appearance of Mrs. Charles Musgrave, who had broken through the hedge and was coming toward them. Of course the introductions were made, Mrs. Harrison officiating with gloomy courtesy.

"Are you related to the Musgraves, stoves and tin roofing, Melrose Street?" asked Mrs. Clayton.

Even Muriel was horrified.

"Oh, no; that is another family," declared Mrs. Musgrave icily.

"I only asked — thinking you were," returned Mrs. Clayton. "They're related to the Storridges, who my daughter is engaged to — Jason Storridge. It keeps her more to herself, being engaged, though I don't see why she should deprive herself of everything. She was asked repeatedly to dance last evening at the Clarendon, but refused — thinking of Jason. So you are not related to the Melrose Street Musgraves? Indeed!"

"How is the Clarendon this year?" inquired Mrs. Harrison, endeavoring to change the subject.

"We haven't joined in — the way Muriel is fixed; but I find some very nice ladies from different places. Do you know a Mrs. Ruffkrueger of Chicago, Illinois? . . . Lord! here is our driver."

"No, we don't wish you yet," Muriel called out impatiently.

"Oh!" said he.

The shirt sleeves flashed out of sight around the corner of the house.

"Such stupidity," exclaimed Muriel.

"This house must be furnished something wonderful," said Mrs. Clayton, craning her neck alarmingly around the back of her chair to peer through a window.

Mrs. Harrison smothered this very plain hint with a simple: "Yes, it is."

"I suppose it isn't entirely fixed up yet — or we might go through."

"Yes, that's it," said Mrs. Harrison.

"Mother!"

Mrs. Harrison recorded a wish that the hedge through which Mrs. Musgrave had come had been of iron palings, six feet high.

Jack Harrison was giving his roadster a few touches preparatory to the start for Telford City. The Claytons had departed in the village hack, leaving behind them chagrin in Mrs. Harrison's breast, laughter in Mrs. Musgrave's.

To make matters worse, Mrs. Harrison was now coming down the driveway toward him, having finished plying Mrs. Musgrave with disavowals tending to show that the visit of the Claytons was an accidental cataclysm that might have befallen the most circumspect establishment.

"Jack! How did you come to bring them here? Such frights, such people!"

"I didn't bring them —"

"They said you had invited them at the Clarendon this morning."

"That's not quite it, Emily. They proposed calling and I said, 'All right,' or something like that."

"You shouldn't have. I want none of these second-rate families coming here. You must give up this crowd — the Storridges and their set. What must Mrs. Musgrave think? They're not your father's friends. They're not mine. They're yours. You must see to it that they never come again."

Harrison was toying with a monkey wrench. He threw the wrench upon the ground. There was a point beyond which there was no repression in Jack Harrison.

"Emily, if you're set on a social killing here, you'll have to clean your own doorstep."

Mrs. Harrison just stared.



“ MRS. HARRISON JUST STARED ”



CHAPTER XXII

TWO TRIUMPHS

MISS CHARLOTTE ELDRIDGE's wish for a closer acquaintance with the pleasant Mr. Harrison kept Egbert Eldridge prowling the boardwalk at his sister's behest in the hope of a chance meeting with the young gentleman, a chance meeting when a dinner invitation might be extended. In no circumstances was Mr. Harrison to suspect. That was the emphatic order to brother. Charlotte had been sorely disheartened by the lack of congenial companions — the summer had been dull. The brilliant "possibilities" were not coming down in numbers this year. The few who appeared were in the train of other girls. Mr. Harrison was a vast improvement over the collegiate infants whose antics on the beach and the dance floor she was expected to approve. There was something distinguished about Harrison for a chap in the twenties. A man like Harrison needn't say much to impress. He had the air of a man of affairs. Romantic mystery rested upon his rather severe expression of countenance. Miss

Eldridge picked him as her cavalier for the summer. The tragedy of it was that Harrison was not to be found.

His search afoot being fruitless, Egbert Eldridge was finally put to trapping Harrison by telephone, which he accomplished at "Seacrest" on one of Jack's visits.

"You haven't been over to see us — yet," said Egbert, while Charlotte stood by the telephone.

"No. . . . I'm coming," replied Harrison with unsatisfactory vagueness.

"When?"

"Well —"

"To-night?"

"Yes, I'll be over. Thanks."

So Harrison, who had no great desire to open a new vein of social activity during his short lounging at Siatuxit, was enmeshed by the Eldridges and their hospitality.

Coming down the stairs at "Seacrest" in his dinner clothes, he observed that Mrs. Harrison was eyeing him with considerable interest. With his sensibilities still smarting from the encounter with her over the visit of the Claytons, he felt under no constraint to acquaint her with the purpose of his departure. However, he would say this much for her: she had evidently made no report of their disagreement to the elder Mr. Harrison. The father

continued to be beamingly cordial to the son. A less astute woman would have taken her grievance to the head of the house. Jack Harrison admitted that her attitude was promotive of peace at least.

At the foot of the stairs he bowed pleasantly and went out. She never dreamed of the Eldridges, nor of the *éclat* that attached to this resplendent young man now striding forth to their home.

Harrison found at the Eldridges a small dinner party of six—the family of four and two house guests. Placed opposite to Charlotte Eldridge he detected her looking at him a great many times. But he attributed these glances to maidenly interest, and devoted himself as best he could to the stout matron who had been placed beside him to draw his conversation.

For a time following dinner the guests walked about the Eldridge place, which consisted of a roving, bungalow-shaped building in white cement set upon a lawn studded with rock outcroppings,—a roughly picturesque location with the sea awash upon the cellar walls. There was much of interest to show and be admired, and Harrison soon awoke to the fact that Miss Eldridge was his cicerone—had taken charge of him. One by one the others dropped away. Presently they were alone in a turreted balcony beneath which the surf splashed against the rocks.

242 THE MAN WHO WON

The waves gave a sound refreshing to his mood. He was rather glad he had come. Miss Eldridge vivaciously talked of a great many things. Within a short half hour he had very convincing glimpses of her many sides. By schooling and upbringing and nature's endowment she was a girl equipped to please. For the first time Harrison began to realize from the patent signs that he was in favor.

"Siatuxit — what do you think of it?" she asked.

"I like it."

"My! It's frightful this year. No life."

"I come down only two days a week," he pointed out.

"I've wondered where you've been. Is there a thing one can do here?"

"Well, I've had a dance — two, I think. The Musgraves' and the Blatchfords' — Telford City people."

"Oh, yes, I've heard of them." She said it good-naturedly, she rather admired Harrison for owning them. Clearly the young man was not intent upon climbing out of his circle. Anyway, the Musgraves and the Blatchfords were of the better segment of the Telford City colony, she understood. However, she was not dealing with a group, but with the flower of a group. Harrison represented

that thought to her. She resumed: "I've had dances, too — a dozen, but with such male babes! . . . Now I do hope, Mr. Harrison, that you don't sing stein songs, or tell stories about stealing the chapel bell clapper. Really, Mr. Harrison, you don't look as if you would do such things — and spoil my summer further."

"I have no such vices," he replied. "And your summer — has it been spoiled?"

"Ridiculously thrown away — to date. But I have hopes now. I am beginning to meet *some* desirable people. Please include yourself in that classification, Mr. Harrison."

A moon appeared casting a silver light on the water and rocks below. The song of the sea came to the couple. Charlotte had grown upon him in their brief colloquy. Perhaps the night added to his pleasure. He had no definite moorings in the zone of the heart. Alice Lane was nothing to him! Doris Edwards had drifted out of his existence. And right here at hand was magnificent diversion: beauty in undoubted capitulation, a family that spoke first names with the New York Grahams and the Pittsburg Shoulters, an abode full of wonderful nooks — summertime wooing! Youth untrammelled by ties could ask no more.

"Siatuxit needn't be dull if the right folks — meet the right folks," he said with a direct glance.

244 THE MAN WHO WON

He had taken up her trend of thought in no great seriousness.

"Yes. . . . if they meet," she parried.

"I hope you and I are the right folks," he continued. "It wouldn't be bad."

"You are a funny one, Mr. Harrison. I fear you are terribly experienced."

"No, indeed. I haven't an *affaire* — not a real one."

"No? Several little ones instead. . . . However, you are quite a relief in a dull season. I'm glad you came. But you must not misjudge me. I'm not usually so progressive."

"You flatter me."

"Take your comfort from it, then. You are very nice, I'll say that much. Now we must really stop this talk. Mercy! What have I said to-night?"

She grasped her cheeks with her hands in a pretty little gesture of mock embarrassment. Harrison laughed; and Egbert came up and put an end to their conversation.

Egbert proposed, as an extension of his hospitality, that they "take in" Stilson's, the pavilion of Siatuxit. So the guests went to Stilson's, where nine-thirty is the hour of polite arrival.

At tables at one end of the carpeted area contiguous to the dancing floor sat Siatuxit's paragons,

as completely exclusive as reservations *en bloc* could make them. As if by joined wires did the current of talk and laughter knit the animated groups at the tables.

The Eldridge party, through Egbert's management, joined a group already holding two tables and two waiters in jealous possession. Egbert had additional chairs placed within the buzzing circle, with the result that Harrison found himself crowded by table legs and silken knees, his senses enlivened by the near press of brilliant femininity. For him there was instant admission to the friendship of this snug knot of beings. The Eldridges' introduction was password. In fact, Harrison was rather pointedly cultivated as a mark of friendliness to Charlotte, upon the very optimistic theory that the man of the moment is the man of final choice.

There were in the party a Mrs. Decker, who was attentive to a melancholy appearing Mr. Knowles; and the husband of Mrs. Decker, who was pouring out his soul to a rapt Mrs. Billings; and the latter's husband, who was in close communion with himself; and William Graham of New York, the millionaire of millionaires, wifeless, glum, and sixty, who was at this moment being torn between the rivalries of a *débutante* and a *divorcée*.

Mr. Graham said very little and nodded his head a great deal. Charlotte seemed to be a favorite of

the dancing men, and was led out for every dance. Harrison, when he was not dancing, found the melancholy Mr. Knowles excellent company, his melancholy being only a mien, not a trait.

“Tell me, somebody, who are the divine things who seem to be taking us in from that doorway?” asked Mr. Knowles.

One glance in the direction indicated by Mr. Knowles gave Harrison a start. There, peering into the dining-room with timid strangeness, was Eva Wilcox, and of all persons — Alice Lane, surveying “the crowd.” They were with two young men. The intention of the party was merely to look in. Harrison bowed to them; incidentally experiencing a smarting of chagrin. . . . Why had Alice not told him she was coming to Siatuxit? Only a week earlier he had seen her at Galeville, but she had avoided any reference to her intention to visit Eva Wilcox. And she knew he came weekly to Siatuxit. What was the matter with Alice? Who were the young men? Was this to be the end of his amiable companionship with her? — which, if it had been devoid of courtship, still held forth for him the promise of a day of better understanding. One glance and Harrison was miserable. Then Harrison gave way to a gust of bitterness. He would show Miss Lane that she dare

not underrate him. He would take out Charlotte for this very dance. To be with Charlotte Eldridge was social success itself. Yet Harrison cared nothing for the status she conferred; he was addressing Alice Lane through Charlotte Eldridge. A mantle for the moment: of no value to him when Alice should take her leave.

Glowing acquiescent, Charlotte had risen to take the floor, but the melancholy Mr. Knowles intervened momentarily.

"The girl in the doorway — who is she, Mr. Harrison?"

"Which one?" replied Harrison, somewhat inflamed by Knowles' question. "The slender one?"

"No, the stout, jolly-looking one."

"Oh! . . . She's Miss Wilcox."

"Introduce me." The melancholy Mr. Knowles was very serious about it. Charlotte Eldridge goodnaturedly accorded precedence to this latest fling of Mr. Knowles' fancy.

"Certainly — some time," promised Harrison, hurrying away with Charlotte to the floor.

A half-tour brought them in line with the doorway. Eva Wilcox was beaming with another nod, but Alice Lane's eyes and interest were engrossed with (according to Harrison's close scrutiny) a very trite and unimpressive young man. With her head averted from Harrison's glance each time he danced

by, his revenge fell heavily, a mockery to its author. Eventually, over the bobbing shoulders of the dancers, he noticed that the quartette had withdrawn from the doorway and were walking down the long hallway, the trite young man palpably in command of Alice's closest attention.

And Harrison had been dancing a sober five minutes with Charlotte Eldridge with not so much as a word to her. Charlotte had ceased to be a personage of splendor.

In his poignant consciousness, Alice Lane had triumphed this evening.

In the Wilcox cottage, modestly sequestered on a side street — in the tiny guest chamber of chintz and flowered wall paper, sat Eva Wilcox and Alice Lane, talking over the doings of the day. Came a discussion of Stilson's as a rendezvous of fashion.

And then —

"I forgot to ask you, Eva — who was the pretty girl with whom Jack was dancing?"

"Charlotte Eldridge. She's in the real top set."

"Indeed. . . . I suppose this is the last we'll see of him, then."

"Oh, no. He wouldn't ignore *us*. I don't think he's that kind."

"But why shouldn't he, with all those celebrities to go round with."

"I do believe you're pouting. . . . Heavens! Alice Lane, can it be that —"

"No. . . . Mr. Harrison is nothing to me — nothing. I'm going to bed now."

In Alice's poignant consciousness, Charlotte Eldridge, in enviable resplendence at the side of Jack Harrison, had triumphed this evening.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHIEFLY BLISS

JACK HARRISON went home from the company of Charlotte Eldridge with no feeling of buoyancy over his signally brilliant evening. Instead, he was disturbed by the constant thought of Alice Lane. Alice, not Charlotte — homey Galeville, not flaring Siatuxit!

The sum total of these musings was that, lacking a definite attachment with Alice Lane, there was nothing of purpose or worth in this world.

At eight o'clock Harrison tumbled out of bed with one clear resolution — to see Alice, and to talk with her that very morning. Business could go by the board this day; business was not in the reckoning.

Ten o'clock saw his roadster at the Wilcox curb, and Harrison dressed in his morning nattiest clothes. Eva came to the door (summer house-keeping having precluded a maid), and greeted him with the warmth of old.

"Will you girls take a ride?" he ventured, as Eva led him into the parlor.

"You mean: Will Alice take a ride? Be honest," exhorted Eva, laughingly.

"No, no, I mean —"

"Bosh, John Harrison. Your car only seats two. What do you want me for — ballast? Don't be silly. I'll ask Alice."

She darted away, leaving Harrison with the conviction that there must be a fitting reward for such martyrs to friendship. It flashed upon him that the melancholy Mr. Knowles, of Stilson's somewhat nightmarish proceedings, had commissioned him to arrange a meeting with Eva. Good! He would do her a reciprocal turn in part payment of her many, many kindnesses.

In the midst of his planning to offset the debt, Eva brought down Alice, an entrancing figure in yachting white serge.

"My! I'm glad to see you," he said, rather slowly.

"Thank you," she replied with an exuberant nod. Harrison took heart.

"A little ride this morning — how about it?" he queried clumsily.

"Delighted," she answered.

"And you, Eva?" he asked.

"I? John, I have housework to do. So you run along with Alice and eliminate this excessive politeness."

"But, Eva, you're always welcome," he insisted.

"You are hospitable, John, but putting my hundred and sixty pounds into that scant roadster of yours is not to be deemed an act of friendship. And further — why should I spoil a very pleasant morning for two persons who may have something to say to each other?"

"And who *may not*," added Alice. Harrison laughed forcedly.

Once outside, he ministered to his roadster glumly. Alice stood by.

They rolled away along the shore road — Harrison not knowing what to say, his companion in a receptive silence.

It appeared that everybody was out this morning. Harrison waved to Egbert Eldridge, who, driving a bay to a park wagon in this gasoline age, attracted considerable attention on the boulevard. Mr. Graham came along in an electric brougham. Even Charlotte Eldridge was abroad, and her recognition, sweepingly cordial, somewhat tempered Harrison's dejection.

"Miss Eldridge, wasn't it?" Alice asked.

"Yes. Charming, fascinating girl," answered Harrison. She turned to him with red cheeks.

"Oh, I see!" she said quietly.

"I don't know what you mean," he replied.

"I mean," resumed Alice, "how charming must

Miss Eldridge really be when you, of all unimpress-
sionable men, are so outspoken — well, it is a sur-
prise.”

“ But I have met her only recently,” said Harri-
son.

“ All the more significant . . . your words.” A
tinge of pallor stole into her cheeks. Harrison saw,
and his heart bounded at this sign. So it did matter
to Alice — this bogus devotion to Charlotte El-
dridge.

He opened the roadster’s top speed.

They were sweeping through green country, a
half mile back from the sands. Here the marine
and the agrarian were in combination. On front
lawns vividly colored surf-boats contained flowers.
Chickens were cooped within discarded fish nets
fastened to upright posts. Clam shells marked out
pleasant paths to cornfields. Lobster pots piled on
farmhouse porches indicated grangers turned fish-
ermen. Farm children were playing with old cork
and periwinkles and the odd loot of the beach.

Anemone whitened the roadsides. A few wild-
rose blossoms still lingered. Clover and buttercups,
lilies and daisies jeweled the meadow grass. Blad-
der-campion bloomed snowy in the fields. And
upon everything was the steady bracing wind of
the sea.

Speedier than the breeze the roadster flew. To

hillocks and hollows with considerable difficulty. The wheels flung sand and ripped grass. Not a miss was there in the engine's hard breathing. Alice held her breath as the roadster threshed through a little gully filled with water and leaped out dripping. Then it puffed up an embankment to firm ground.

"You *can* drive a car," she said as they came to a stop.

"Well! You do grant me that much. You used to grant me very much more — in those pleasant days in Galeville."

"Galeville is not Siatuxit, *I find*, Mr. Harrison."

"Miss Lane, I really think you wish to drop me from your —"

"No, no. . . . I don't, truly. I shouldn't have come if I had anything like that in mind. Really —"

She seemed to be anxious to remove such an impression from his mind.

"But, Miss —"

"Really —"

"Shall we walk around a bit?" he suggested.

"I think it would be fine."

There was a perceptible change in her manner. It was her real self for the first time that day.

Along the grassy plateau they strolled toward the sea. A cool, fresh breeze was coming from the

sea. A few remaining wild roses, and some clusters of swamp honeysuckle decked their pathway. The meadow lily was here. Good rich earth had conquered the sand, had thrown its shield of green to the terrors of wind and sea. It was a garden amid the arid dunes.

To the very edge of the bluff they walked, the firm thick turf affording a safe foothold. Below, the spreading shore was paved with rocks—rocks turned green with seaweed, rocks brown-burnt by many suns. There were pebbles and cobbles, and jagged boulders that showed teeth to all things afloat, whose prey was still lying upon their rocky breasts—the timbers of good ships that had come to an end. A lost race of seafarers—a maritime America of sixty years ago spoke from the wooden-pegged beams of archaic barks long since gone to grave on these shores. And then the bones and bits of craft of a newer age—a splintered prow, the sundered ribs of a two-master of trade, a fo'castle lamp, a wave-borne mattress—lay witness to the wrath of the deep.

Alice and Harrison sat upon a substantial fragment of a hatchway cover which some enthusiast had lugged up from the shore. The south wind, diminishing toward the noon, was softly stroking the waves, mottling them with grayish shadows. A trillion facets of light were present at a glance.

Down the beach the rollers were casting their foam upon the level sands. Gulls swooped over a nearby fish-trap. A tug was snorting offshore with four-barges in tow. A three-master was making in, pinions a-spread — but still miles away. The sun smiled. Harrison smoked a cigarette in silence.

"A wonderful picture!" exclaimed Alice, accommodating herself to the hatchway top as though it had been a drawing-room settee.

"It is a wonderful picture," admitted Harrison. "But I wasn't going to talk about that. I had something else in mind. Please tell me what seems to be the matter — with me."

"With you?" she gasped in surprise. "Who ever —"

"I mean, how is it that you and I don't — don't seem to hit it off as smoothly as we formerly did? I'm the same Harrison —"

"You are? . . . *Are* you?"

Her challenge was clear-cut. It marked the end of her morning's parrying.

"There! That's it! That's it!" exclaimed Harrison. "You don't think I'm the same Harrison. What have I done to deserve your — your indifference? — we'll say?"

"By being quite indifferent yourself. You have really not been John Harrison."

"When was this?" he inquired in amazement.

258 THE MAN WHO WON

"In Galeville? — certainly not. Then here at the Beach, maybe? Was that it?"

"Why — you admit it, it seems."

"No, I'm eliminating Galeville as an impossible source of discord."

"But you are including Siatuxit."

"Hypothetically," he insisted.

"No — with a conscience uneasy, I'm quite sure."

"Indeed, no. I have no knowledge of doing anything here that should affect our friendship. I can't imagine to what you refer — unless you feel that last night —"

He paused.

"Mr. Harrison, you are supremely your own mentor in what concerns your own inclinations. I was certainly not referring to last night."

"But there is something —"

"Well" — her ruddy cheeks still held — "as long as we have gotten this far into it, for which I am heartily sorry, I may as well be frank. . . . I've been at Siatuxit . . . over two weeks . . . and I haven't even heard from you . . . once."

With these measured phrases it was plain to see that she was barricading, not only her very natural resentment, but also her very feminine tears. There was a strong streak of battling courage in Seth Lane's daughter. It occurred to Harrison that the grim mettle of the parent was in her fiber.

"At Eva's two weeks? Heavens!" he ejaculated. "I never knew it."

"Everybody else knew it."

"Gad! but I'm sorry. Never heard a word. I should have been there. How could you doubt it? I did not know you were here until I saw you last night at Stilson's. This morning I called. Now isn't that so?"

"Y-yes." His logic was a ray of light upon their differences. The hint of a smile was upon her lips. "Of course," she continued, "if you didn't know about my being here, I must forgive you — and you must forgive me."

"I do."

Her smile came forth full-fledged. She glanced at the three-master coming on in its glory of canvas.

"Isn't that vessel splendid!" she remarked.

"Pshaw! Don't let's talk about the vessel. Let's talk about ourselves this magnificent day. Let me talk of you, and you may, if you wish, talk of me."

"Then begin, please, Mr. Harrison."

"Oh! . . . M-m! Well, to talk of you — and to sum it up in a word — there's nobody in the world I'd hate more to lose the friendship of than —"

"Myself. How pretty! And it quite pleases

260 THE MAN WHO WON

me even if I do feel I'm blushing. But I like it. We seem to be quite Galevillian in our amity these last few moments. Isn't it fine? Do go on."

Gayly she laughed, while Harrison's brow furrowed.

"I would if I thought you'd take me seriously. But it seems —"

"I will — Mr. Harrison — take you seriously."

He half-turned, leaning toward her. There was something in his eyes she had never before seen — an eager daring that pinned her own glance to its gleam of intensity. She understood this strange new man; had always understood such a man, although he had never appeared. There was nothing anomalous in the staring being, whose eyes blazed into hers, whose long warm hand had enclasped her own as it rested on the wooden seat. She felt no revulsion at his act — an act new to her. She did not identify it with a John Harrison, but with a super-John-Harrison whose burning expression was a magnet for her soul. It fascinated her, lulled her into a torpor exquisite in its sense of rest. She could not have spoken if she had willed. She was submerged in gray-blue eyes. She was happy.

"Miss Lane — Alice — I think a great deal of you — care for you very much. . . . You said you'd take me seriously. I love you, Alice."

She lowered her eyes. A great weight was at

her breast. The man offered himself, laid his all at her feet — his supreme gift. And her life's moment had come. His eyes pleaded, asking much. She trembled, and fought for her breath.

"I never dreamt it," she said. Her voice was soft and musical. "I'd sort of . . . figured you as a man who cared for many girls, not one."

"You're the one," he remarked simply.

"My!"

"Alice you'll pardon me, I hope. It probably is not of any consequence to you."

"Who says that? Why, it is of consequence to me. It's the most interesting thing I've ever heard. . . . Heavens! I don't know that there's anybody that I think more of than —"

"Like better?" he chimed in feverishly.

"Like better — than you. In fact, there isn't."

"Then — couldn't we be a little closer than we have been . . . so that these awkward misunderstandings, like the one of this morning, could not happen?"

John Harrison kissed Alice Lane.

"We mustn't be engaged!" she whispered.

"Mustn't?"

"No, I don't think we should. I'm just eighteen, and ought not to think of m-making any definite plans. And, then, there's father to see —"

"By me?"

262 THE MAN WHO WON

"By both of us . . . later . . . if we th-think we ought to go ahead with — if our —"

"I understand," said Harrison. "Well, suppose we let it go this way: We'll not be engaged, but we'll be very, very close."

"I'll be close . . . yes."

She smiled in her surrender.

In Harrison the practical man rose over the lover.

"It is the better way," he said. "I am not what one would call definitely established. Until I am, this arrangement will be just what should exist between us. Frankly, the *Galeville Eagle* is an experiment, and may not amount to anything, while my secretaryship with my father is contingent upon his sovereignty in politics. That may come to an end, some day. . . . But see what I have to work for now? Really, I've begun to feel strange ambitions already — since I've been encouraged by you. This life is now worth living — for you."

He drew her to him. In mere weight it was the body of a child; in delicate development it was glorious woman. He marveled at his own temerity with this goddess of his constant dreams; he even resented, in a way, her submission to the profanation of his touch. The lover's fear — that she had known such a scene before — was upon him. He explored her eyes with an anxiety that might have been a parent's. He saw that the eyes were moist

— that she was limp in the spell of this strange upheaval of her being — that it frightened her, and it fascinated her. She trembled.

“Don’t fear, my love,” he said in a soft whisper.

And he kissed her again and again.

CHAPTER XXIV

A CONCESSION TO MATILDA

SCAFFOLDING had been erected in the Harrison cottage. Men in overalls were on ladders working on draperies and electric bulbs. The reception hall, library, and den were being merged into a ball-room. Huge palms had been placed throughout the house. Marquees were being erected on the lawn. Carpenters were pounding a wooden horse-shoe into the semblance of a dining table, which was to be placed on the lawn.

It can be seen, therefore, that Mrs. Harrison was doing her best to prepare for the ball, but she was not deriving much pleasure — nothing to what she had hoped when "Seacrest" was rented. Siatuxit had matured into a grievous disappointment. She had discovered in Siatuxit's ruthless appraisal, her friends — Telford City's best — were but social half-castes compared to the main cottage and hotel visitors. Her own intimate friends, then, were something second-rate. She was second-rate. This cruel estimate decreed by the *monde* was undeniable. Facts were facts.

A CONCESSION TO MATILDA 265

By the operation of these severities Mrs. Harrison found that she was debarred from many pleasures. One was the bathing club — a company affair in the hands of the families of first rank. A portion of the beach where the sand flats made safe shallow water for the women and children was the club's choice reservation. In addition, there was attached a small casino, the more popular appurtenances of which included a stand-up luncheon, and a dance after the morning dip. Riotous little evening affairs were also a part of the program at the club. These *outré* rarities struck envy into the heart of Mrs. Harrison. Together with the other Telford City outcasts, she nibbled greedily at the shreds of information about the very sensational bathing-costume dance, and the equally famous moonlight wade. Some of the Telford City unfortunates, who had no beach property, were actually compelled to use the Sixth Avenue baths. True, Mrs. Harrison had her own bathing beach, but the shore of "Seacrest" was pebbly, the bank steep, and the breakers bowled one down. Nor could the company of a few cronies in the morning waves obliterate throbbing thought of the hilarities up-beach at the bathing club.

The bathing club grieved Mrs. Harrison as a contrivance of class uppishness. Still she retained her own "uppishness" in regard to the McClintocks

266 THE MAN WHO WON

and the Mullses and the compeers of her Telford City début.

Then there was the Country Club at Siatuxit — another source of irritation. Of course, she had membership but what a membership! The nights of glory were Wednesdays and Saturdays, when the beach front crowd held the ballroom by contract, and one might by eavesdropping from the balconies, gain sight of gaities sufficient to sicken an ambitious heart — might see the set roster of Siatuxit's fashionables in their superlative moments of pagantry. Other Country Club nights were but gayety falsified. Ghosts of social pretense stalked across the dance floor. There was dress and diamonds but no *éclat*. Musicians yawned and waiters relaxed. "Off nights" were these when Telford City's best held the floor.

So the Country Club was another mortification to Mrs. Harrison.

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A dapper, springy little man who pirouetted up and down ladders and across scaffolding, and who shouted orders to the men working outdoors, was plainly in charge of the decorative labor pertaining to Mrs. Harrison's ball. He permitted no one to doubt this for a moment. When Mrs. Harrison entered the pseudo-ballroom, the springy little man bounded from a chair.

A CONCESSION TO MATILDA 267

"Good morning, Coles," Mrs. Harrison said.

"Good morning, Mrs. Harrison. What do you think of *us*?" To identify the word "*us*," he pointed to the mural embellishments then under way.

"I suppose it's all right," she said with a keen eye ranging the area of Mr. Coles' handiwork.

"Well," replied Coles, "you can't expect too much with all that lattice work bare — awful! I don't like my work to go *out* unless it's just so. I don't take any credit from bare lattices — never do. At Mr. Graham's *festa* he had real roses. *But you might have paper rosettes at least.*"

Mrs. Harrison flushed. The inference was odious.

"I'll have roses, Coles, and the best — mind. Fifty dozen, say."

"Be enough — yes. I'll telegraph for them."

Mrs. Harrison withdrew from Mr. Coles in no remarkably affable frame of mind. Coles was a brute. These little artisans were grovelers before the socially famed, and impudently frank in the presence to the unelect like herself. Mrs. Harrison pondered: "I wonder if that little rat of a man thinks he is my equal?" Then she hated Siatuxit for germinating such an attitude in the common mind.

Mrs. Harrison was not in good humor. Nor was

268 **THE MAN WHO WON**

her mood improved when a maid handed her a card bearing the name of Miss Matilda Mulls, whom she thought safely immured at Atlantic City. But Matilda was here, waiting on the veranda.

“Why, Matilda, who . . . ever . . . !”

Matilda leaned forward to receive Mrs. Harrison's merest pat of a kiss. The kiss was admirably corrective of erroneous expectations harbored by Matilda as to the warmth of hospitality to be accorded her.

“How is Atlantic City? You're looking well. Why did you pick out such a warm day to come over?”

“You see, Emily, I had to go to Telford City on some matters,”—Matilda reddened—“so I said to myself, ‘I must drop off to see Emily.’ I suppose you have had a brilliant summer.”

“A quiet summer, Matilda—quiet. Nothing that a young girl like you'd enjoy. Bridge and modest little teas. I knew you wouldn't care for it, so I didn't write you to come. Place is dead.”

“Oh, I'd loved to have come, Emily.” Her eyes snapped hopefully.

“Now isn't that too bad. If I'd known that you wanted to come, I'd had you the first two weeks in July. Pshaw! I'm having Mrs. Wrighter come to-morrow for two weeks, and then my sister Clara's

A CONCESSION TO MATILDA 269

Betty is coming, and the Lord knows how long she'll stay. Then it'll be Labor Day, and the summer is gone! Have you been bathing, dear?"

"Oh, yes . . . we go a lot."

Matilda's features peaked wearily.

Mr. Coles came forth with the query, "Did Mrs. Harrison desire to have a temporary cloakroom? — for if she did, his men could make a very pretty one out of hangings that might be placed at the rear of the ballroom."

"Ballroom" put Matilda into a flutter.

"Are you giving anything, Emily?" she inquired.

"Yes — a ball — to-morrow evening. Won't you come inside and see the decorations?"

Matilda was bewildered by the news, combined with Mrs. Harrison's easy nonchalance in imparting it. This, then, was the Emily Graydon whom her family had launched into brilliant matrimony. This, then, was Emily's manner of requiting the boon of a lifetime — exhibiting with impenetrable unconcern the stately trappings of an affair from which the Mullses had been cut away as though they had been lepers.

A heaviness of limb, a drooping, sickening sense of rebuff came over Matilda.

Mrs. Harrison drew her into a small room where a workman was unpacking boxes, and disposing their contents on a table.

270 THE MAN WHO WON

"See, Matilda, these pretty figurettes that I am giving for *bonbonnières*? . . . And we're to dine off my old blue, brought up from the city. Gaetani is to cater. He charges, but, Lord! why not? We're to have *homard*, and *ris de veau*, and *viande rôtie*, and — oh, no, you don't speak French. . . . Now, let's see, dear. You and I'll have luncheon all to ourselves in a few minutes, and we can talk over so many things. I do want to hear about your father and mother. You haven't even told me how they are — good honest souls! Then after luncheon I'll take you riding, and drop you at your hotel afterwards — or are you returning to the city this afternoon, Matilda?"

"I had sort of — of figured on going back this afternoon," returned Matilda weakly.

"Must you? Well, then, I'll take you to the station myself. Is it the four-eighteen?"

"Y-yes."

"Fine train, Matilda. One stop — Stearton. . . . Now do come into the ballroom and tell me what you think of —"

"Let us rest here a moment. I'm quite fatigued," said Matilda, seating herself wearily.

"Certainly you are fatigued, you poor dear girl. I'll have a cup of tea brought in while we are waiting for luncheon. What a very foolish trip this was for you to take, Matilda — never letting me

A CONCESSION TO MATILDA 271

know a word about your coming. Heavens! you must have started early."

"I left Telford City on the eight-forty."

"Good gracious! What a train! What a time! Matilda, I really believe — Matilda, tell me, did you come to see me about anything in particular?"

Matilda hesitated, although the word was on her lips. Mrs. Harrison eyed her penetratingly.

"Did you, Matilda? . . . Now what is it, dear?"

Mrs. Harrison's divination was truth itself. Guiltily Matilda squirmed in her chair. Her hour here had been full of pin points. She had been a mere blundering child in the hands of Mrs. Harrison. Now she thought it best to come forward with a child's frankness and disclose her purpose in coming to Siatuxit.

"I did come here for something, Emily, but not for myself exactly. It is for father, although I suppose I would be benefited. You see, Emily, with all the money father has spent on me, I haven't seemed to have advanced. I'm almost twenty-five now, and I have absolutely no prospects in view unless I choose to sacrifice myself to some well-dressed nobody — which I won't. . . . But mother doesn't entirely *blame* me. She realizes that father and she haven't been able to place me in just the right circle of people that would give me a chance to meet

272 THE MAN WHO WON

somebody nice — you know, Emily — fellows with something coming from their families: not necessarily money, but a kind of an established standing like the people you go round with . . . *now*. Well, of course I don't blame you for not getting us in with them. We're the rankest kind of trades people, and no education. No, I don't blame you about that, Emily — don't think I do . . . though I suppose I have in the past."

The "past" referred to by Matilda as the period of Mrs. Harrison's neglect was, if Matilda had spoken ingenuously, but a few moments before. But Matilda had bolstered up her confession with several little stratagems that had occurred to her in passing.

"Mother and I have concluded, therefore," she resumed, "that there is no hope for me in Telford City. Where we're known, we're dishd. That's plain. So the thought struck us, why not a new field? The idea was excellent, but then there were father's business interests to take into consideration. He couldn't move away from Telford City. Then it dawned upon us that if he could get something political, something that would take him to Washington a part of the time —"

"Washington — wouldn't that be splendid?" exclaimed Mrs. Harrison.

"That's what we thought, mother and I,

A CONCESSION TO MATILDA 278

Mother said that if father could get to Congress — be elected, you know — I'd be able to meet some very fine people from all parts of the country, and papa's being Congressman would carry the presumption that we were somebody in our home district. Then too,"— and Matilda's note grew high with enthusiasm — "papa could outspend most of the other Congressmen when it came to entertaining and such things. Don't you see what it would mean to me, Emily, to — well, to have at least a chance of saying 'no' to *something* promising, instead of fighting off proposals from small clerks and office fellows in Telford City. It would be a new Matilda in the ring, you can bet."

"Why don't you do this — carry out this idea?" inquired Mrs. Harrison.

"We will — with your help," returned Matilda bluntly.

"Heavens! What can I do?" Mrs. Harrison was perplexed. She feared some new draught upon her social eminence. What dispiriting, dragging-down bores these Mullses were! She flushed rather impatiently.

"You can do everything, Emily," answered Matilda. "You are the one Mother and I depend on."

"Well?" Mrs. Harrison's chilling inquiry was an admonition not to expect a great deal.

274 THE MAN WHO WON

This forewarning shattered Matilda considerably, but she came bravely to the point.

"Would you do this for mother and me: ask Mr. Harrison to give the nomination for Congress to father?"

Mrs. Harrison beamed. To her notion the request was small. It concerned politics—something in her husband's domain. To ask him this seemed a great deal less to her than using her own influence to give the Mullses a standing in Washington—which was what she thought Matilda was driving at originally.

"Matilda—you know I'll do it. What made you so halting and backward about it?" she chided, with quite a comfortable feeling of philanthropy.

"I didn't know if you would find it convenient to do this, Emily."

"Shucks! I don't go back on my friends. I can't do everything they ask or expect"—(a sharp hint thrown out in this moment of magnanimity)—"but I can and will do very many other things—like this one. So there! Don't go back and say I've outgrown the Mullses. There're my very good friends, your father and mother, and I'm just going to make Mr. Harrison do as you ask. See if I don't write you some good news shortly. Now, then, kiss me, dear, and don't harbor such horrid thoughts

A CONCESSION TO MATILDA 275

about Emily Harrison as you've had — Tut! tut! you did, my dear."

Mrs. Harrison kissed Matilda.

"I think you are very, very kind, Emily."

"Well, then — come in to luncheon," she branched off irrelevantly. "We're going to have some fine cod mayonnaise and fruit tarts. We won't bother getting very much. It's most two o'clock now, and there's our ride to take, and you mustn't miss that four-eighteen."

In thinking of the Mullses and what she had charged herself to do in their behalf, Mrs. Harrison glowed with a strange satisfaction. Even the excitement incident to the forthcoming ball had yielded place to the soothing consciousness that she was doing something that she ought long ago to have done — to tab an act or two of requital upon the record of what the Mullses had in balance against her.

When her husband came in that evening, straight off she bearded him upon this subject.

"But I've half-promised to nominate Cosgrave for Congress," protested Edward Harrison.

"Pshaw! You don't want Cosgrave," she pleaded with feminine logic. "Let Henry Mulls have it."

"Henry is all right, but Cosgrave was in the field

276 THE MAN WHO WON

first. Furthermore, the party owes Cosgrave a whole lot."

"And we — you and I — owe the Mullses a whole lot."

"Indeed we do. I have recognized that fact for some time. . . . I asked you to invite them to your ball."

"We couldn't do that, Edward, unless we let down the gates to the whole horde of them — McClintocks, Storridges, and all that truck. But we can pay our debt in better coin. You'd think so if you had heard Matilda pleading for the chance to go to Washington — to get out of the Telford City slough. It's Matilda for Congress! Hurrah! What do you say? Come, dear."

"It's Matilda for Congress, I guess," said Edward Harrison, with a smile.

CHAPTER XXV

LOYALTY IN PRACTICE

RIDING back to "Seacrest" after his high-wrought day with Alice Lane, Jack Harrison was conscious of a new meaning to existence. People and things stood forth with changed forms and values. There was nothing to be hated, nothing that was ugly. Viewpoint radiated from Alice and was rosy-hued as to everything. His eyes drank in beauties from the commonplace of the highway. Houses: they had an altered significance now. Alice should pick her own from these. And the little gardens with the roses abloom — were these not delights for Alice and for himself? The world seemed to be viewing him as an object of festal approbation. Within him was the proud spirit of the embryonic bridegroom. It had been a day of great joy.

The sun was going down when he drove into the driveway at "Seacrest." His father and step-mother were on the veranda awaiting dinner. Mrs. Harrison was quite jovial. She had accomplished the task of persuading her husband that Matilda

278 THE MAN WHO WON

Mulls' father should go to Congress. Edward Harrison was wondering just what language he would employ in explaining to one Cosgrave about the sudden ascendancy of one Mulls.

Carpenters' hammers were still to be heard; the ball preparations were nearing completion — a reminder to Jack Harrison that he had business with his step-mother upon this very score.

"Emily," he began, as he sat with them, "would you mind giving me invitations for Miss Wilcox and Miss Lane for the ball to-morrow night? I know it is a little late, but I've just learned of their being here."

"Miss Wilcox?" exclaimed Mrs. Harrison, losing her serenity of the moment before. "Eva Wilcox — that big thing? Why, John!"

"Which Lane family is it — this girl you mention?" asked Edward Harrison, to create a peaceful diversion.

"Sheriff Lane's daughter," replied Jack.

"Oh! — the man Henry Mulls is going to run against for Congress," said Edward Harrison.

"Isn't that *funny* now? You go with her, don't you?"

"I — I go with her . . . quite a lot."

"Isn't that funny?"

Edward Harrison was in cogitation upon the fact of his son's confirmation of the faint rumor that

the younger Harrison was paying court to the daughter of the sheriff of Mahoos County.

"So this is the Miss Lane I've heard about," he thought to himself. "A nice pickle it puts me into if Lane gets the Congressional nomination on the other side. But then Lane might not get the nomination. And Jack might not care about her by that time. Anyway, what in the devil has love got to do with politics, anyway? So Jack's got a girl!"

"Emily, invite this Miss Lane," he said.

"Why, yes, I'll fix it — *for Miss Lane*," Mrs. Harrison rejoined.

"But I couldn't possibly ask Miss Lane without Eva Wilcox," insisted Jack, "and I would not do it, anyway — Eva's such a splendid girl."

Mrs. Harrison raised two finely curved eyebrows.

"Then let it go this time, Jack," she said. "I'll have the two girls to tea some afternoon. They probably wouldn't want to meet our friends. There'd be scarcely any hope of the girls continuing the acquaintances when they returned home. I'm not responsible for the Wilcoxes not being admitted to our circles, and as for Miss Lane — she must be a nice girl!"

Mrs. Harrison smiled at Jack. Edward Harrison marveled at his wife's tact. Jack rose in silent submission.

280 THE MAN WHO WON

"Dinner will be ready in a moment, Jack," reminded Mrs. Harrison.

"I'm going out to dinner."

"Where, may I ask?"

"Eldridges."

"What! The Philadelphia Eldridges at Rockmere? — No!"

"Yes."

"Lord Heavens!" The expletive portrayed Mrs. Harrison's astonishment. She sniffed deceit — mutiny. The thought that she had refused his appeal for the plebeian Eva Wilcox made her uncomfortable. Surely this John Harrison was an odd individual — standing sponsor for Wilcoxes and hobnobbing with Eldridges.

At length she turned to her husband.

"What do you make of this Jack — of ours?" she asked.

"Jack? Oh, he's come to the stage where he's taking the bit, you'll find."

This was not said in a condemnatory manner.

Charlotte Eldridge was Jack Harrison's dinner partner. There was a note of more than moderate family interest in his presence — a concentration of little pleasantries and attentions upon him, not shared by the other guests. This flattery was plainly in behalf of Daughter. Evidently there had

LOYALTY IN PRACTICE 281

been family council upon Harrison's qualifications.

Charlotte was wonderfully attractive this evening. The hair dresser, the masseuse, the modiste had rendered her a marvel to impress the eye. And her method toward Harrison to-night was attack. Their slight intimacies of the past she was converting into sentimentalities. Their talk on the balcony; a "love waltz" (so named) at Stilson's; some trivialities of intercourse that had sunk out of memory so far as Harrison was concerned; were the subject of adroit reminders on her part. Harrison was courtly but unresponsive. Half of the time he was thinking of Alice. Alice's words — their very intonation, echoed in his recollection. The sea, the rocks imaged themselves again. The sun blazed down for him, the south wind sang. The day came back. He was with Alice — at Charlotte Eldridge's very elbow.

Melancholy Mr. Knowles was more doleful than ever at the side of a woman of youthful inclinations but of an undoubted forty-five. Several times, attracting Harrison's attention, he rolled his eyes to heaven in the accredited dramatic expression of craving mercy, a supplication that had unmistakable reference to the woman of forty-five, her harassing proximity, and its dolorous effect upon her table-mate of due assignment. Knowles was a *farceur* who recognized neither time nor place. In self-pro-

tection Harrison was constrained to look away from him.

Once during the evening Knowles remarked mystically to Harrison: "How is *my* friend?" For a moment Harrison was puzzled. "You know, the *peach*, the big girl you were going to introduce me to?" said Knowles. "Eva"—thought Harrison. The fellow was serious about that at any rate. Eva's summer had probably not been brilliant. And Mr. Knowles would no doubt be her season's masterpiece. And scores of favors were due to good-natured Eva Wilcox for benefactions past but cherished.

"I'll fix it," promised Harrison.

"You said that before, sir. Now you make good. I'll see you later."

This interchange had whetted Charlotte Eldridge's curiosity, although she chose to treat it jocularly.

"So you are a distributor of peaches," she said to Harrison, "and you have *one* for poor Knowles—from your many. But really, must you have so many. . . . now that you know me?"

With her waggish touch she was seriously making love.

"I have not . . . 'many,' as you say, Miss Eldridge."

"Well, then—any?"

LOYALTY IN PRACTICE 288

"*Any* might mean a few. I do not lay claim to 'a few.'"

"Now, Mr. Harrison, I am getting down to pin points — 'not many,' 'not a few,' just . . . One? How about One, sir?"

Harrison felt a surge of recollection, a pride of possession walled secure — and secret. Not a hint, not the slightest admission of his treasured happiness would he allow to escape him. He smiled stolidly — expressing nothing.

"Now how did we come to talk about a thing like this?" said Charlotte, with a light laugh. "We just seem to drift into these heart chats. I do believe *we're* sentimental."

Charlotte conveyed this belief with what was intended to be a disarming grimace. Still she presented to him a quizzing, almost anxious look. Her mother, too, was boring him with her solicitous eyes.

"Mr. Harrison — I do believe you'd rather talk shop," Charlotte pouted. "You're dreadfully unresponsive. Why, the other night . . . the balcony night, you know . . . you gave me quite the impression of being interested in the harmless little things of sentiment. But I presume balcony nights *for business men* ought to be rare," — was her thrust of sarcasm. "Let us be sane, then, if that is what you prefer. . . . See how miserable Mr. Knowles is over there — from being too sane to-night."

"I think Knowles is incongruously attached," he suggested.

"Mr. Knowles has never been compatibly attached at any dinner table in my recollection. That's his lone excuse for remaining bachelor, I suppose. Still his mother has hopes for him. She'd like to get him married off to rid the house of his cynicism. Such a wit as his is terrible to live with indoors. By the way, his mother gives her ball to-morrow night."

Harrison considered this — his step-mother's ball was also to be held the following night. It was a troubling thought, too, bringing remembrance of the recent difference regarding Eva Wilcox. Then he remembered Knowles' almost inexplicable interest in her. He sought Knowles when the diners rose. A pair of plotters, they took to a dim veranda corner to arrange — though little they dreamed it — what was to be the good Eva's fate. Harrison lauded Eva to him — a debt-paying proceeding, since he praised her to the skies, yet painting but the Eva he cherished in his gratitude.

"And they have a cottage on Freemont Avenue?" Knowles inquired for the fourth time. "By George, I know the one — green and white trim with a skeeter porch, and Sweet William pinks in August. Look here, Harrison, is she such a good fellow as you've described her?"

"Stake your life on her, Knowles."

"Say, do you know, she appeared that way to me the first time I saw her — and I only got a glimpse. And you wouldn't call her a poor looker, now would you, Harrison?"

"Certainly not. I'd call her a fine set-up, hearty girl."

"Well, you fix it, old chap," said Mr. Knowles.

"Ten o'clock to-morrow morning at the Eighth Avenue Pier," reminded Harrison.

"Now you're talking, friend," said the melancholy Mr. Knowles.

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Ball day at "Seacrest" began feverishly. The hall doors were wide open at seventy-thirty in the morning admitting flowers, furniture, and the boxes of the caterer. Mr. Coles' men were like spiders weaving their webs of draperies across ceilings and down walls. Mr. Coles had become generalissimo on this day of concluding achievement — shunned overalls, tabooed ladders and held the floor in a black frock suit. Tradesmen's wagons were unloading their stores, and there was a great din from the opening of boxes and the crashing in of barrel heads.

Due to the condition of the dining-room, a breakfast table had been set up in a little south room. The family trio ate together. Edward

Harrison, who had been the buffer between his wife and son the evening before, was unusually devoted to his food. He seemed to be dreading another outburst that would put his impartiality to a strain. Mrs. Harrison appeared irritable, harassed by duties, impatient. From her seat at table she was transmitting her orders to every part of the house and grounds. No wonder Edward Harrison bethought himself that his wife's social campaign was a network of complexities — a too fuming, arduous undertaking for such a delicately strung person. Edward Harrison kept diligently to his omelette. It was the securest employment this morning.

"Oh, I say, Jack, have you thought about bringing Miss Lane to-night?" suddenly began Mrs. Harrison. "Your father and I have decided that we would very much like to meet her."

"I thought we settled that last night," replied Jack, very evenly, and free from the least shade of choler.

"Settled it? I thought we were to take it up again this morning. Won't you bring her?"

"I have another engagement for her."

"My!" she gasped in surprise. "Aren't *you* yourself coming to our ball?"

"Yes, until ten-thirty. Then I'm to call for Miss Lane and take her to Mrs. Hubert Knowles'."

"John! . . . Mrs. Knowles' ball? What kind

LOYALTY IN PRACTICE 287

of slyness is this? Why didn't you tell me you'd met *them*. Through the Eldridges, I suppose?"

"Yes, I met Leigh Knowles a few days ago. He asked me to invite a couple of friends."

"A couple? Whom did you ask?"

"Miss Lane and — Eva Wilcox."

Mrs. Harrison turned lividly to her husband. "Edward, you can see for yourself that there is deception here."

Edward Harrison leaned back from the table.

"This is pretty shabby, Jack?" he said, with a look which Jack knew was a sign of high-pitched wrath.

"I might have told you about the Eldridges," he said in a monotone, "and I suppose I would have told you if I had thought of it. No reason not to. As to the Knowles' ball, Leigh Knowles gave me the invitation last night, and I accepted — for the sake of Miss Lane and Miss Wilcox. Of course, I could have brought Miss Lane here, but I could not throw over Miss Wilcox. Eva Wilcox is a friend of mine. I stick to my friends. Father, you preach that doctrine. You say your organization is built upon it, that you'd topple down overnight without it. If I stick to my friends, I've taken it from you, father."

"Shabby, Jack, shabby," muttered Edward Harrison — wrath gone.

CHAPTER XXVI

SORROWS COME TO EMILY

A LINE of limousines moved toward the ivied gates of Mrs. Hubert Knowles and the hedged driveway of Mrs. Edward Harrison. To Mrs. Knowles went no finer machines, no costlier gowns, no more imposing folk than came to Mrs. Harrison. Exteriously there were no distinguishing marks upon the two lines converging to the night's gayety. Indisputably, Mrs. Knowles was receiving aristocracy, Mrs. Harrison an imitative miscellany. The Telford City colony was her fusing base, to which were added a considerable number of cottagers, and a few hotel sojourners of somewhat hazy prestige. Yet in some respects there was but shadowy demarcation between Mrs. Knowles' guests and those of Mrs. Harrison. Jack Harrison had bridged this boundary, by taking the obscure Eva Wilcox and Alice Lane to the great affair at Knowles. Still, the renowned Mrs. Wrighter herself could not have accomplished this much — even with her iron mills and her countrywide fame. Haphazard circumstances had achieved this for Jack Harrison. His

SORROWS COME TO EMILY 289

accidental meeting with Egbert Eldridge had been the open sesame. Harrison had entered by a crevice while avowed applicants were pounding at a steel door. There was no set rule of admission. Admission was predicated upon the opportune fitness of things. Jack Harrison's ascent to social grace epitomized Society's eccentric view of eligibility, of qualities bearing upon the question of *entrée*.

"Seacrest" was separated from the Knowles place by one block, a long avenue lined with elms. Motors bound for either function were interlocking in the currents of travel. Coiffure wisps were tossed gently by beach and zephyrs. The day's warmth lingered; the evening was mild. On all sides resounded notes of festivity. The sedate neighborhood was ablaze and clamorous. Laughter came across the lawns. The houses adjacent to the two of formal entertainment were alight and in ferment.

In spite of its surface brilliancy and gayety, there was dolor at "Seacrest." The planned master-stroke was not to fall. Mrs. Wrighter, expected at noon, could not come: tonsillitis. A telegram lay in Mrs. Harrison's room, crumpled like Mrs. Harrison's hopes. The news had taken the marrow out of the event for her. To have presented Mrs. Wrighter as a house guest would have been huge consolation after a summer of disappointments.

290 THE MAN WHO WON

From the standpoint of Telford City, Mrs. Wrighter was a trump card. And Telford City marked the height of Mrs. Harrison's aspirations now that she realized that the Graham and the Shoulters' set were high barriers, spiked and barbed. All summer Mrs. Harrison had heralded Mrs. Wrighter's appearance had swaggered over it a little. Tonsillitis was such a weak-sounding excuse.

Mrs. Charles Musgrave had taken Mrs. Wrighter's post on the flank of the hostess in the line of reception. Within the short weeks Mrs. Musgrave and Mrs. Harrison shared thoughts and secret motives. They had even come to the point of discussing their own husbands — truthfully.

"Never mind, Emily," consoled Mrs. Musgrave, "you have *everybody* else here."

"I wonder if she is really sick?" Mrs. Harrison asked.

"Well, the Wrighters are treacherous."

"I could have given this ball earlier, or later, if it hadn't been that I was banking on her. She even selected the date."

"Anyhow — what do you care what the crowd thinks?"

It was a striking note of mutual agreement, this belittling of the Telford City cottagers. It did not, however, assuage Mrs. Harrison's lacerated feelings.

"That's just the reason I do care — that *they*

SORROWS COME TO EMILY 291

should think Mrs. Wrighter left me in the lurch."

Mrs. Harrison was low in spirit. Even the enlivening scene before her failed to buoy or distract. In fact, her guests became afflictions. Their shortcomings, however slight, became their whole selves. They were rayless mediocrities; yea, yokels who would venture into social rivalries with metropolitans. Samuel Corson — who gardened in his shirt-sleeves on the attical boulevard; Cyrus Whitmarsh — who carried fresh meat forty miles in the heat of summer to curtail seashore prices; Elwood Thane — a man who protests against the injustice of a two-dollar steak on the *menu*; a dozen more of these tightfists of wealth, these thrifty, homespun sons of scraping forbears, were here — her guests. They were faultless before the eye, noxious to the seeing sense. And smiling nearby was her stepson, Jack Harrison, who had planned at the hour of ten-thirty to depart from these depressing mediocre levels to the altitude of Mrs. Hubert Knowles' station. A lucky young man, and a deceitful young man, she concluded. In the future she would give him the shadowy side of her friendship.

To-night Mrs. Musgrave was equally critical. Witness:

"Look — at the door! Cora Beekman in yellow! Never should wear it. She's too liverish. . . . Mrs. Gilfoyle. . . . My! what an icing she

292 THE MAN WHO WON

got from Mrs. Shoulters. Did you hear, Emily? Why, little Eddie Gilfoyle has been playing with the Shoulters young ones, and on Monday Mrs. Gilfoyle followed after Eddie into the Shoulters' place, and was well received — by the servants. Mrs. Shoulters sat on a veranda and saw everything of it, excepting Mrs. Gilfoyle's bow. I tell you, we're in right. . . . How do you do, Mr. Taylor!"

With Mr. Taylor shunted away in a moment, Mrs. Musgrave resumed: "I guess we've all had a miserable summer with more slaps from the big ones than ever. . . . This is my last season here. Mr. Musgrave says he wants comfort, not social competition in the summer. . . . You look sweet, Miss Hillary!"

Mrs. Harrison had already heard of a number of her season's coadjutors who had decided to desert Siatuxit. Certainly she would not come again. But where was she to go? Her prestige had been earned in Telford City, and was passing current among Telford City notables of position. But these same notables were classed as inferior at Siatuxit. And how would a new summer colony receive her, an unknown? And where was there a desirably rarified social atmosphere like Siatuxit's that would not oppress or smother an entrant as did Siatuxit? She remembered that once Mrs. Musgrave had told her that *anybody half decent* could get into

SORROWS COME TO EMILY 298

Telford City's best circles. Mrs. Harrison began to subject Mrs. Musgrave's saying to analysis. Then she recollected that her own election to the reigning sisterhood of Telford City via Mrs. Blatchford's tea had been accomplished by her husband and Mr. Blatchford on the basis of politics. And now the grossness of this conspiracy seemed to be not unfitted to the grossness of these disappointing people, once super-folk in her neophytic view. No wonder *she* had gotten in. Who, half-decent, couldn't? One thought pervaded Mrs. Harrison's mind — what uselessness and waste was this present scene, this ball, but a glorification of personages inconsequent, an evening amounting to nothing.

"I understand Jack Harrison has attained the friendship of the Eldridge-Shoulters group," said Mrs. Musgrave. "How did he ever manage it?"

"He didn't manage it," replied Mrs. Harrison in a tone apologetic of herself and of her own eclipse. "These things are done better without management. He fell in. An old school friend — Eldridge. Mere luck."

"Can't he do something for you?"

"Do you think I'd ask *him*?"

Mrs. Musgrave, silent, concluded that a domestic volcano was seething beneath the brilliant surface of things.

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294 THE MAN WHO WON

Having Leigh Knowles for sponsor, Jack Harrison with Alice and Eva attracted considerable attention. Knowles blazed a triumphant trail for them. He was most unctuous in his presentations. To the more formal introductions he would add a whisper.

"Son of Edward Harrison," he would say with a clever glazing over of the somewhat rough edges of the subject matter. "You've heard of him. Old warhorse. Don't care a rap for Society. Comes pretty near running his state. This *young* Harrison is great. No politics about him — a finished product — er — socially, you know. He doesn't care whether we take or leave him. Newspaper owner; *ideals*, sir. And what do you think of his friend, the slim girl? Isn't she a gem, now? And the other — there's the best-natured girl I've ever met. Big, every way, and has looks, too, don't you think?"

Somehow, Knowles looked forty. For years his cynicism had fed upon the hypocrisy and shallowness of his intimates. The opposite virtues — frankness and a sturdy wholesomeness — he saw personified in Eva Wilcox.

.

And Alice! Her physical attractiveness reached an apex to-night in her delicate evening gown. Knowles said to him: "There is *nothing* better

SORROWS COME TO EMILY 295

here, old man. What a lucky fellow you are!" Harrison smiled. This prize of womankind had dedicated her all to him. He scarcely could believe the fact. There came to his mind the picture of her surrender. She — who was hedged about with all the primnesses of conventionality to-night — now meant life to him, love launched upon its way. He was not even alive to the significance of his presence in this brilliant scene, to its possibilities for his own social betterment. To him the scene was but a temporary setting for Alice, and had no further meaning. Jack led her away to the stillness of the garden. Unobtrusively they passed from the glories of Mrs. Hubert Knowles' ball to the comparatively small concerns of their two selves.

"Well — how have you been, John, since our last good talk?" she asked.

"I have been anxiously waiting to see you again," he answered, "to verify my memory — to be convinced once more that I have not merely dreamed wonderful things."

"Dreamed?"

"Yes . . . of your promises, and of our plans."

"You have not dreamed this, John. All my promises I renew. It has made me very happy to think of what we have set out to do. I have thought over ever so many times what this new relation is . . . that we have taken up so solemnly with each

other. A solemn thing to me—I had never spoken my soul to a man before.”

“And I—never to a woman. Believe this, Alice. My time had not come until that day on the beach. And it is to be?”

“Yes, John. Think of it! And I am to have you.” She laughed lightly. “You know, I always really wanted you. That is why I behaved so wretchedly toward you at times, I suppose. It was a funny way of showing I cared for you, wasn’t it? And you were quite boyish yourself, in your jealous moments. Ugh! how disagreeable you can be—when you strive to match me. Please, try not to be headstrong when I am. Pick out some other time—and see how nicely we’ll get along. Father says I’m a filly that has never been broken. But I can be led. I’m telling you this because I’ve chosen you to be the one to lead me.”

Her words came soothingly to his ear. More and more Alice and Jack were entering upon a facile understanding. A feeling of contentment, of peace was Jack Harrison’s.

“The realities almost overwhelm me,” he said, taking her hand. “Thought is ecstasy these days . . . and yet I suffer torments when I allow myself to think that we have agreed upon a postponement.”

SORROWS COME TO EMILY 297

"Could you have the marriage sooner? You know we went into that thoroughly."

"I know. It mustn't be sooner. Yet Time will be cruel. It will be torture."

"Oh, I know! Why, John, you're downcast because I'm still to have men friends call. How else can we evade suspicion? — and isn't that exactly what you wished — to have our understanding unknown to the world until you are ready to take me?"

"It's all right, I suppose, only —"

"You're jealous, John."

"I am. If I weren't, I wouldn't be worthy of you. Some fellows can coolly tolerate other men. I can't."

"Sewell Bullard isn't so bad," she protested. "There's no harm at all — calling on me. Talks cost systems and headachy things. He's romantic about botany — and nothing else. You don't see a rival in him, do you?"

"Oh, no," he said, "I'll pass up Bullard."

"Well — then there's Ralph Brewster. He has called once or twice."

"Brewster? Bah! I'll permit you the friendship of a thousand Brewsters."

Harrison smiled. "I consider him as a competitor only in business."

She wondered a little at his estimate of the journalist Brewster. Her father had drummed it into

298 THE MAN WHO WON

her that Brewster was a growing power; one who could inflict great harm as well as extend great favor; a being to be respected and diplomatically handled. Pondering deeper, she now drew the inference from Harrison's manner that at bottom he admitted Brewster's potency, but viewed it with defiance. She remembered that Harrison had seemingly objected to Bullard the nonentity, but not to Brewster the celebrity. A sportsmanlike preference to make contest against strength rather than against weakness, she thought. Yet how ridiculous in John Harrison. There was no contest.

"I'll not have Mr. Brewster come if you think —"

"Let him. He doesn't worry me, my dear." He waved the topic aside a trifle impatiently.

Other lovers were prowling around the grounds, oblivious of damps — strangers but allied with them in happiness. Then came Leigh Knowles and Eva Wilcox to announce supper.

"*They* haven't even danced," said Knowles to his partner.

"*They* are beyond dancing, quite beyond anything — but you mustn't tell," admonished Eva.

"Tell? Lord, no! Maybe some day I'll need both of 'em for confidants of my own."

Then Eva blushed and looked her prettiest.

.
The lights of "Seacrest" were blinking in house

SORROWS COME TO EMILY 299

and tree and garden bush. Outdoors a depressing fog was settling, enshrouding the trees and lawn. The foghorns of Ledge Point — a screecher and a boomer — were filling the night with their melancholy sounds. Into Mrs. Harrison's bedroom the screech and the boom penetrated, torturing her ears and her nerves as she lay face downward upon the *longe*, a shaken, worn figure. She was weeping softly, pouring forth her stress of trouble.

Her husband's heavy step sounded outside her door. She sprang up and waited for him, drying her eyes, smoothing out her dress. He entered the room, hands in pockets, saturnine as usual. A big cigar was stuck in the corner of his mouth.

"You've been crying, Emily."

"Yes . . . this has been the worst day of my life."

"Worst!" He withdrew the cigar from his mouth as though he had been puffing the burning end. Edward Harrison's gesticulations were with cigars — and nothing else. "Phew! 'Worst' is a word that takes in a good deal. Is it because of Jack?"

"Yes, Jack and everything. Mrs. Wrighter's not coming knocked the ball endwise. Supper was a mess. And the crowd . . . I'm sick of them — and I'm going back home."

800 THE MAN WHO WON

"Why — there's at least three weeks of the season left. You —"

"I don't care. I'm going back to Telford City, *bad as that is*, to-morrow."

A screech and a boom came in from the sea at that moment and Mrs. Harrison shivered.

CHAPTER XXVII

CUPID'S PLATFORM

A VERY warm night: Jack Harrison was sweltering over copy, preparing the Galesville *Eagle* for its weekly flight. His working quarters had improved greatly since he first took hold and sent out the seedy, heroic Mr. Woods to hoof the byways for advertising. Mr. Woods had done quite well; the *Eagle* office, in its appearance, had perked up amazingly. Harrison had done away with the pristine dust and had banned the old practice of flinging litter to the winds. He had set trash baskets in noticeable places. He had posted up a few signs hygienic in purport. The desks and the shelves had been cleared of accumulated rubbish. Out of his own funds had come an oak filing case, an innovation too modern to be appreciated by Woods. The floors and windows were cleaned once a week,—also over Mr. Woods' veto. Outdoors, the decrepit eagle was feathered afresh and re-taloned,—once more offering a noble mien to Main Street.

From a financial standpoint the *Eagle* had

302 THE MAN WHO WON

reached the halcyon period of its career. Occasionally there fell a bad week, and Harrison would foot the loss, always seeing to it that Woods and his family did not share the misfortunes of the sheet. Consequently Harrison had set aside a little bill against the future prosperity of the *Eagle* — and trusted in Mr. Woods' marvelous foot power eventually to redeem the obligation.

The advance of the *Eagle*, although slight, was sufficient to arouse notice on the part of the *Star*. The proprietors of the *Star* had long been accustomed to look upon the *Eagle* as a non-competitive paper — the subject of pity. Now from the accounting hive of the *Star* were coming reports that the *Eagle* was stirring.

And the report was that the *Eagle* was beginning to *interest* some of the *Star's* big advertisers. Now and then the *Eagle* would impose upon one of these firms to the extent of obtaining an "ad," the equal in size to the one carried by the *Star*. Such equality in the matter of selling publicity was not to be tolerated, of course, by the *Star* magnates.

So the *Star* began a campaign of detraction. The *Eagle* was not attacked in print. That would be blazoning the *Eagle's* name to its own benefit. Instead, the *Star's* solicitors conferred with the town's advertisers — warned them that money put into the

Eagle's columns was worse than thrown away, that the *Eagle's* circulation was a joke, and that the few subscribers it possessed were not the class of people who shopped from "ads." A few Galeville merchants decided to have done with that "sheet," but there inhered in others a disposition to give the *Eagle* a trial—not a philanthropic stand, but a judgment founded upon the *Eagle's* low advertising rate.

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Harrison heard footsteps on the old rickety stairs. He laid down his pencil with a smile. He knew the steps—Rufus Wilmot's, the bee-busy coroner-jailer. Rufus frequently visited the *Eagle* office. He came and smoked his pipe, and watched Harrison's blue pencil at work on copy. He would wait for Harrison to lay down his pencil and then would rattle off town intelligence until the young editor resumed his labors.

The Galeville *Star* was Rufus' living torment. Occasionally the *Star* would cast aspersions upon Rufus' conduct as coroner. And Rufus a raving candidate for county commissioner! The *Eagle*, therefore, was Rufus' solace both in companionship, and in view of the fact that the paper was the competitor of the *Star*.

To-night Rufus was accoutered for jail duty—the baggage master's hat and the militia lieutenant's

804 THE MAN WHO WON

coat. Ten o'clock was the hour for reporting at the jail.

"Jist missed 'a death' by fifteen minutes," said Rufus in a saddened tone, as he hauled out a sheet of paper bearing brief notations. "Coroner Stahle got *it* — ole man Deever from arter'o s'roses on the street. I passed the spot where it took him fifteen minutes before the seizure."

Harrison began to take down the news on a pad.

"Yes," continued Rufus, "Amasa Deever. . . . Life-long Odd Feller . . . kep' gen-rul store and was once a can'nidate for the Legislater, but was bet by Dr. Horn . . . got that? He is survived by two sons and a darter: James, liv'ry stable; Arthur, clerk down to Benner and Smithses'; Maud, married over to New York. . . . 'Range-ments for funeral not been made . . . was once census-taker under Grover Cleveland . . . fell to the sidewalk . . . fifty-eight year ole . . . was a shock to host of friends and 'quaintances . . . 'fliated with the Presbyterian Church . . . weakness came on jist as he was turnin' into Redway Street . . . I ought to *had* him, Mr. Harrison."

"Where did you get those notes?" queried Harrison.

"Coroner Stahle gave 'em to me for to give to you. The *Star* has forbade him for to come up

into the *Iggle* office with news, but he don't want you to think —"

"Oh, no. I understand his position. Well, Rufus, you just sit here and smoke while I beat this 'story' together."

Rufus saw the "story" grow from a few scrawly memorandums to a sheet of words in clear purple type. He wondered how it was possible for the human brain to perform such a marvel. More than ever was he certain that the young man with the wavy light hair was ordained to be the nemesis of the *Star*.

"What do you gather about the fall primaries?" asked Harrison, tossing the Deever "obit" into a basket.

"Well, I gather that there is consid'able likelihood of myself bein' nominated, though it wouldn't do no harm to touch me up a little in an early issheer con-cerning my 'tention to duty, and some difficult cases of vi'lence that has come into my hands, and the cleverness I handled them — almost like a doctor, you could say. Also, the hours I been on duty draggin' rivers and cricks for bodies with no pay onless I found the corpse, you could say; not forgettin' what I have done for the town of Galeville in ref'rence to developin' Midwood Heights at the ridic'lous, onheard offer of absolutely nothing down and —"

306 THE MAN WHO WON

"About Sheriff Lane's candidacy — what is new?" Harrison broke in.

"Lane? Oh, Lane, he wants Congress but he ain't nowheres near as strong as he used to be. You know, 'tween ourselves, I could tell a good many things 'bout the way he's been running the jail, but —"

"Never mind about that, Rufus." Harrison's cheeks reddened.

"But," added Rufus, "I don't doubt but he'll be nominated bein' no very strong oppersition 'gainst him. . . . She'ff Lane ain't the worst either," continued Rufus, recalling the fact that Harrison was a frequent visitor at the jail. "Seth Lane deserves credit. He come up from scurcely nothing — a farm hand. I ain't the man to criticize him. Only . . . couldn't he be a little less for'ard in doin' the things he does do, don't you think, Mr. Harrison?"

"I suppose so," answered Harrison.

"How's the *Iggle* goin' to treat the she'ff in this campaign?" inquired Rufus. "The *Iggle* ain't his politics, Mr. Harrison."

"The *Eagle* is no longer in politics," returned Harrison.

"I see," exclaimed Rufus breathlessly. What he visualized was the looming up of Alice Lane as a factor of political significance: her influence staying the stroke of this weapon of publicity, the ac-



CUPID'S PLATFORM 307

credited cudgel of a party. Love had laid hold of the *Eagle*, and bound his beak and talons. Thus thought the loquacious coroner as he smiled and left the office.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MULLS GETS A GROOMING

It was a humid day with the weather a rational topic. In the throne-room of Edward Harrison, potentate of Telford City, Jack Harrison was at his secretarial tasks, incidentally fuming at the weather and things in general. The morning mail was under his hand and eye. Into one pile went the mis-sives of secondary importance which later he would answer and sign with his modest "Secretary." Another pile was for letters of importance demanding the attention of the elder Harrison. Edward Harrison's official correspondence snowed down upon every street. Yet he did little more than direct the trend of the replies, leaving the actual composition to his son.

"Here . . . Fix it up," Edward Harrison would say, handing Jack a letter. "Tell Mr. Teavy I can't do anything for him."

These meager directions Jack Harrison would amplify and adorn with graceful diction in order that Mr. Teavy, on receipt of the communication,

MULLS GETS A GROOMING 809

would feel sustained and elevated amidst his disappointment.

"My dear Mr. Teavy," the letter would run. "I have endeavored very earnestly to obtain the position of weighmaster in the Department of Construction for you; and have been very much distressed to ascertain that this class of work comes within the civil service, the extension of which to municipal positions I have fought from the very beginning, as you are probably aware. I feel that the public service should be open to the loyal men of party, of influence in the community, rather than to nonentities who can merely fling answers to examination questions. Matthews has told me very often what you have done and can do in the Fourth Precinct of the Twelfth. Please consider that I appreciate your work. May I take the liberty of keeping my eye open for another position? I have taken the liberty of making a memorandum of your particular application, and shall notify you when something suitable presents itself."

Upon receiving this letter to sign, Edward Harrison would say: "Yes, Jack, that is what I want. . . . Exactly. . . . Keep on impressing them that civil service, not Edward Harrison, is keeping them out of jobs. I guess maybe I'll be able to dig up something for old Teavy, too. Find out some time if he can see well enough to inspect street paving."

810 THE MAN WHO WON

Upon his typewriter Jack Harrison hammered noble sentiments into his father's letters. This was not hypocritical on his part — merely instinct in him to write a pleasant gloss over unpleasant truths, to lighten with a merciful literary veneer the disappointments that a political ruler must inevitably dole out to the seeking throng. As a secretary Jack had done wonders.

It was quite true that Edward Harrison's control was based nine-tenths upon admiration of his personal qualities. He lived in dread of that hour when he should find his power waning, his supporters outnumbered, and he must go the way of defeat.

Edward Harrison was the main-spring of the "organization." Organization made a door-to-door canvass of every street, manned cigar stores and saloons with Harrison's advocates, dropped words of praise in lodge councils, directors' meetings, and church boards; caused the press to puff, the bench to excuse, the bar to defend; circulated wily foreigners among their own kind to preach the virtues of the "ring"; helped poor devils out of jail or into hospitals; drank with drinkers, prayed with the saints, kissed strange infants, subsidized the mercenary, cajoled the submissive, and roundly damned the opposing.

To work out this plan of organized espionage,

MULLS GETS A GROOMING 811

Harrison had in his office, in an unpretentious oak cabinet, a card index system which gave the political tendencies of every voter. On nearly every card there was a memorandum stating who could best be brought to influence the particular voter. The *who* was generally an organization follower; or one whose services the organization might command. These were the invisible reins which Harrison held over the electorate. Occasionally he permitted access to this cardboard thesaurus to trolley, railroad and brewing companies having cases *before* juries. Many a lawsuit had come to crash due to Harrison's card files. Of this Jack Harrison harbored not a hint. To his notion the index system was for purposes legitimately political. Its other use was one of the secrets of his father's soul.

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The assortment of the mail finished, Jack leaned back in his chair and watched Jim Fulton creaking across the floor. Jim was putting a new card into the index, clerical labor that seemed to tax his mentality to the utmost.

"A new voter come here from Holyoke," said Jim. "Stewart mailed *him* in yistiddy. Stewart gits 'em as soon as they light. Whereabouts do you put this at, Mr. Harrison?"

"East Broad Street. In the seventeen hundreds. Third drawer, there."

Meanwhile the door opened and Edward Harrison entered, brisk, abrupt, sharp-set for the day's tasks, an inexorable figure of business. He looked almost youthful in a tight-fitting gray suit. In his walk, his glance, there was an undeniable suggestion of energy. His personality was most impressive. Yet he impressed people by his calmness, by his silence; not greatly by his words. He saluted his son with an indifferent "good morning." The embroglio at Siatuxit was only a week past. He was not particularly cordial with Jack nowadays. His attitude was rather one of polite aloofness that required no explanation.

As usual there was a crowd of visitors waiting in the ante-room. Jim Fulton singled out Henry Mulls as the caller of first importance. Mulls wore a statesman's frock, gray silk waistcoat, and pearl colored tie. His dress heralded his mission.

"I got your note, Mr. Harrison, and I suppose it was about Congress — what Matilda was telling me about."

Mr. Mulls was a little flushed and unnerved. Politics was a new tack to him. The unfamiliar sensations were difficult to correlate. It all seemed wild romance. He had achieved everything in the world but public notice, and now that was to come to him through the instrumentality of the puissant gentleman, who was touching knees with him.

MULLS GETS A GROOMING 318

"Yes, Mr. Mulls, I've had you in mind. I think you are the man to make the run," said Edward Harrison with measured gravity. "Of course, I can get you the nomination, but you'd have to work night and day to be elected. Your opponent will be, most likely, a man named Lane from Mahoos County. We can beat Lane, I think!"

Mr. Harrison was glaring at him.

"I'm very grateful to you. . . . I'll run," blurted out Mr. Mulls.

Mr. Harrison extended his hand. Jack Harrison also congratulated him. He felt that this was the beginning of his real career. What givers of joy were these Harrisons! What friends for a man to have! His thoughts dwelt affectionately upon his daughter Matilda, who had brought about this meeting. And he was to go to Washington as a towering personage, a member of Congress! Such luck for a poor boy from the old East End! Henry Mulls' eyes glistened.

"Um! — what can we count on you to do?" The question came boldly from Mr. Harrison's lips.

"You mean — er — money?" timidly inquired Mulls.

"Yes — partly. You know whatever you give will bring you that much nearer election."

"A check in the mail to-night," promised Mulls.

314 THE MAN WHO WON

"And you want to get your friends to work. Whom can you get?"

Mr. Mulls blushed. By nature he was modest.

"Down to the Chamber of Commerce, they —"

"They'll help. What else?" demanded Mr. Harrison. "Any lodges?"

"No lodges," returned Mr. Mulls, mournfully. He wondered how much that would mitigate against him.

"See here, Mulls," said Mr. Harrison. "It seems to me I've noticed your name a good deal in connection with hospitals and such things."

"Yes, I'm on two hospital boards —"

"Great!"

"And I've given quite a little to the children's home and to the bureau of charities."


Mr. Mulls' cheeks were blazing.

"Aha! Mulls the Philanthropist — that's our campaign keynote," announced Harrison.

"Oh, no; don't do that. I don't want to trade on what I've given —"

"You've given it, haven't you? Well, we're not going to hide it now that you're up against a stiff campaign."

Mr. Harrison rose, and placed his hand on Mulls' shoulder. "You stay home to-night. There'll be some newspaper fellows in to see you. Don't be bashful with them. Turn yourself inside out. I'll



MULLS GETS A GROOMING 815

circulate your petition for the nomination, and I'll have some lithographs printed. All you have to do between now and the third week in September is to bow pleasantly to your worst enemies, and lead a Christian life. Also, don't forget to mail that check."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE GALEVILLE "STAR" SUCCUMBS

HYDRANGEAS in the utmost glory of springtime were nodding over the pathways in the park of the Mahoos County Court House. Bedded flowers were attaining in color and growth their summer glory, adding distinction to the vast grass tract that stretched from the steps of the county building to the prosaic pavements of Main and Fillmore streets. The jail walls flashed the pink, blue, white and red of asters, softening the cold gray stone. A few gifted horticulturists from the cells were at work with rake, spade and hose, elated by the short freedom, and proud of their temporary release. Triumphantlly these men of honor returned the glances of the free men of the avenue.

It was nearly six o'clock in the evening but the day's heat lingered. A stuffy dryness was in the air. Up the pathway from the street trudged Sheriff Seth Lane, face aboil from the weather. All day long he had ranged the fields and lanes, diverting the farmers from their crops to listen to his own

prime business — the pursuit of a seat in Congress. For this work he was Congressionally attired — a wide-brimmed Western hat, Prince Albert coat, hard bosomed shirt, and a black string tie. His eyes had the odd, strange expression of one who has fought dust for hours. He was the first candidate afield. But he needed this good start he had discovered. This year "the vote" was not leaping rail fences to reach his hand of friendship. The sheriff trudged along somewhat moodily.

On the portico stood Alice Lane in summer white — the flavor of Siatuxit brought inland. Seth Lane's weary eyes fired affectionately when he beheld her.

"I'll jist set down 'longside you a minute 'til I git rested," he said, as he gripped her little shoulders playfully with his thick fingers. "Gee, what a day! Hot? Don't tell me. I was down to Spadetown, then acrost the medders to Brookville, and back by way of Luken's Junction. . . . Corn is wonnerful — 'way higher'n your head. . . . And I saw Mr. Brewster jist now."

"Oh — you did?" she said.

"Yes. He's coming down to-night, he said — to see you. Hadn't seen you much lately, he said. Don't seem that he has — does it? Now you behave cordially to him if —"

"Mr. Harrison is coming to-night, dad."

318 THE MAN WHO WON

"Well, you telephone to Mr. Harrison that on-foreseen —"

"I'll telephone *that* to Mr. Brewster."

"No such thing! Hear me? I want no slightin' of Mr. Brewster. We need him, I tell you — awful. Have you seen what the *Star* has been a-sayin' 'bout me? Says if I don't show more stren'th, Slocum will beat me at the primaries. *That's Brewster's hint*. He's playin' me for somethin'. What's that somethin'? I think it's you. So telephone —"

"I told you I was not to be brought into your politics."

"Not to be brought into my politics! Not to be brought into — look here, miss, don't you go too fur with me. I've stood all your whims I'm a-goin' to. Who do you set yourself up to be? — defyin' your father and bringin' him to ruin, which you could a-vert by jist bein' a leetle bit cute with Ralph Brewster. 'Stead of that, you are a-wastin' your time on this Harrison fellow — and what's his purpose? Marriage? Huh! I guess not. His lady step-mother'll not have you, I'll bet. Have you ever been to his house callin'? No — I guess not. Nor you won't. He's a lounge, that Harrison is. Likes to set in girls' parlors and while away the long evenin's. Other fellows'd prefer pool or saloons. His ain't a bad habit, but it is a

habit, remember that, and you're silly enough to nourish dreams along of it. . . . Now, why do I have to stand here and berate you, same's if you warn't my darter. Do you know what I'd do for you? I'd give up Washin'ton — everything. I'd go back to work at ten dollars a month, I'd starve —. What would you do for me? — that's what I'd like to know."

"For you, dad? I'll receive Mr. Brewster to-night." She patted his hot hand, and with her smile made light of his wrought-up state. "Come, sir; don't be so angry and make such long speeches," she chided.

"I've had sort of a bad day," he replied, softening beneath her words. "To-day I didn't hardly git any reception at all. There's something up, Even old standbys like Tom Glosser and Mel Radbourne — they stood off and listened to me talk as if they knew what I was goin' to say, and discounted it."

"It's the *jail*, father. They've heard," said Alice.

"The jail? There's nothing the matter with the jail," he blustered.

"Oh, yes, there is. But we won't argue about that. I'm sorry you are determined to run for office again. Everything that can be said against you will be said, I fear."

"Stop the *Star* from sayin' it, and who'll say it then?"

"Well — send your Ralph Brewster along."

His large mouth twitched.

"My own leetle girl," he murmured fervently.

"Ralph Brewster is coming over to-night. Strictly politics." In this wise did Alice notify Jack Harrison by telephone of the change in plans for the evening. Harrison laughed metallically over the wire, and said it would be all right. Then he sat a full hour grappling with the query: Was it? After which he went down to the Washington Club to resurrect some old friendships who could be depended upon to drown his disappointment.

Brewster arrived at Galeville's fashionable eight o'clock. The sheriff and Mrs. Lane were waiting to greet him, but withdrew shortly after Alice's entrance as a delicate compliment to the visitor. Parentally, Brewster was accepted, there was no doubt.

"My! It is a long time since I have been here," began Brewster in quite a bolder manner than he had hitherto assumed.

"You have made it a 'long time.'"

Her method was deception, unquestionably. Elation of great force took hold of Ralph Brewster.

"I wanted to come . . . but I felt that perhaps you were not so anxious —"

"My father's friends are always welcome — if I am to consider you one of my father's friends."

She inclined her head inquiringly. There was no mistaking her interrogation. Brewster smiled.

"I think I know what you mean, Miss Lane. Please don't misjudge me. The *Star*, you know, is a two-headed creature. I am but one of the two heads. Mr. Siddons' stock can outvote me — often does. In the *Star* office I have stood up as your father's friend, and I intend to do so no matter what view Mr. Siddons may take."

"Oh, we thought the *Star's* pages were Mr. Ralph Brewster," she rejoined.

"They shall be, hereafter," he declared with the first aggressiveness in tone that she had ever detected. "The pages shall be Brewster's, I pledge you."

He drew close to her and extended his hand as if to seal his promise.

"Then you are our friend," she said, putting her hand into his with hesitancy a trifle marked.

"Yes, Miss Lane. Please believe that."

He retained her hand in his pinching grip. She glanced up at him. His face bore its usual calm gravity. Yet here was the fact of his hand-clasp continuing in duration beyond the period necessary to record his pledge.

"Mr. Brewster! This is silly."

She pulled away from him.

322 THE MAN WHO WON

"Pardon me. I meant nothing — shall I say that? That's not quite true. I was carried away by you, Miss Lane."

He said this in his undramatic monotone. He tintured her words with his philosophy of patience. He would try again.

"Now you haven't discouraged me, of course," he said, from a far-off chair in a corner.

"You can't be discouraged, I understand, Mr. Brewster."

"Then would you try it?" he asked adroitly.

"I — I might have to — to show you that you can't win in everything."

"But would you? — and break the friendship which we have just pledged?"

She was silent a moment. Then she said: "We mustn't break friendships. I won't, I'm sure."

"Then, forgetting what has happened, we'll be to each other as we have been, Miss Lane?"

"As *we have been*, of course, Mr. Brewster."

"And may I call . . . again?"

"The idea! Certainly you may."

"I see. Everything is not hopeless."

"Nothing is hopeless."

"As to you, I mean."

"Must you be so very serious?"

"Yes."

"Well . . . does one know the score of a game

before it is played? Do you care to play games, Mr. Brewster, or do you just desire to have the results of games brought to your office?"

"You are a very wise young woman, Miss Lane. . . . I will play the game."

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At Sheriff Lane's breakfast table in the morning, the *Star* passed from hand to hand, a certain editorial paragraph being the engrossing theme. The paragraph read as follows:

"The tour of Sheriff Lane through the lower townships yesterday proved that his popularity is not on the wane, as some of his critics are attempting to establish. On every side he was greeted with the same marks of approbation and loyalty as have been a factor in all of his campaigns. Undoubtedly the lower townships are for Sheriff Lane, and we feel that this is a fair gauge of what the sentiment is in the entire Congressional district. In view of the fact that the only concern of the *Star* has been to find the man best able to aid the party by his candidacy, we feel that the time has now come to definitely commit ourselves to the support of Sheriff Lane for the Congressional nomination in the Third District."

CHAPTER XXX

AS WOMAN WILLS IT

MRS. EDWARD HARRISON, fleeing from the social irritations of Siatuxit, did not improve her peace of mind by returning to Telford City. Her first irritation was the climatic conditions of late summer. Telford City sat low in the valley of the Maugatee River, a prey to mists and humid spells. The river air was enervating enough to normal persons; to Mrs. Harrison, her nerves on edge from the season's shocks and disappointments, it seemed to double her tribulations.

The Telford City élite were away, and their homes drearily boarded up. As she motored by the closed houses on her aimless afternoons, their occupants came again into her thoughts solely as Siatuxit's futile social strugglers—outclassed men and women. What mockeries, she told herself, were these costly town residences, that had no value beyond the city's bounds! Once more she saw Siatuxit with its hedged off fashionables; felt again its clique cruelties. She shivered when thinking

of it. It was the thing she was taking most to her heart.

The greater portion of the time Mrs. Harrison remained at home, brooding as highstrung women will when they harry themselves with the ghosts of past slights and disparagements. Hours she sat at her window, and surveyed the dull, flowerless side lawn as a background upon which to focus her despair. Her husband sought to have her return to Siatuxit, but she recoiled from the suggestion. No more of Siatuxit in her life, she declared. Telford City was bad enough, but an elysium as compared to the other. She would embrace the heat and the ennui of the August city in preference to suffering the tortures meted out to the unchosen at Siatuxit.

"But you are unhappy. We *must* do something," her husband insisted.

"I am unhappy and shall be — away from New York."

"We can't live there, my dear."

"I know, I know."

"It — it is Jack, isn't it?" he ventured.

"*Jack!* Jack doesn't bother me. I don't pay the slightest attention to what he does."

"He could live at the hotel if — if you thought —"

"No, no. I am not going to show myself as the conventional step-mother. People are talking

326 THE MAN WHO WON

enough as it is. I can't stand this notice that we're attracting. Mrs. Musgrave wrote to-day — said everybody knew why I left — and she sympathized with me. Isn't she brutal? I never saw such stupid people as this town produces. No finesse; just raw, boobyish country manners. Now a New York woman would have *admitted* that it was my asthma that took me away from Siatuxit. But what can you expect from clods but one or two generations off the farm?"

Edward Harrison was at his wit's end. He could not fathom these spells of feminine depression. His first wife had been stolid even as an invalid. It bewildered him to see the second Mrs. Harrison in a dozen harassed moods a day, giving vent to tears and dismal complainings,—a plaintive shadow of the once complacent woman who had brightened his hours of leisure. Election was only a few weeks away, and he found himself too busy picking and preparing candidates to take her away for a trip. The family physician put her under bromides and ordered a rest. "Rest?" said Mrs. Harrison. "What else is killing me in Telford City but rest?"

She fumed and worried through the heated days, a worn sufferer. At intervals her mind dwelt upon the time, now fast approaching, when her Telford City friends would stream back to town — to double the poignancies of her bitterness. The pres-

sure of definite torments was upon her. How was she to face these veterans of Siatuxit miseries whom she detested so thoroughly? And, alternatively, what was she to do? — go back to her Mullses and Storridges and McClintocks of painful memory?

One day Mrs. Musgrave called, having run into town for a day's shopping. She came over on one of Mrs. Harrison's "off" afternoons when the latter was stationed by her window in mournful deshabille.

"Emily! How you look! Why, dear —"

"I've been ill. Nerves."

"And asthma," added Mrs. Musgrave. "I do believe you did have it, although 'the crowd' was sure you were only making believe just to find some excuse to get away from — well, us. Oh, the talk was frightful after you left. Your ears must have burned. I wouldn't dare tell you half. My! you should have heard Mrs. Blatchford going on about you — about your 'stuck-up-ness,' as she called it. She wanted to know where the Harrisons ever got license to feel themselves above the Blatchfords."

"I'm not a Harrison; I'm an Arnold."

"Of course she meant your husband's family."

"Mr. Blatchford comes to my husband on his knees to beg favors. Who got him on the bank board, please?"

"Oh, I know, but we're speaking of the social angle only, my dear."

There was a sharpness to Mrs Musgrave's thrust that Mrs. Harrison by no means missed.

"Pray, what else did they say about my going?" asked Mrs. Harrison, partly out of curiosity but mainly to give color to her effort to demonstrate that she was callous to the opinion of her critics.

"M-mm! They seemed to think that Mrs. — er — Mrs. Wrighter never really made an appointment to visit you. Now that's what *they* said. I wouldn't think of doubting your word."

"Such people!" cried Mrs. Harrison. "Why, Mrs. Wrighter was anxious to come at the time she and I talked it over. Don't you believe that?"

"Well . . . I saw Mrs. Wrighter downtown this morning, and I'll tell you what she told me. She said,—mind you, these are her words,—she said, 'I think the Harrisons wanted a political friendship with us. But Mr. Wrighter will not be dragged into politics.'"

"Oh! . . . how unjust!"

"I think, in the main, Emily, that you've acted foolishly. You might have stayed the season out at Siatuxit. *We* were not so horrible as all that."

"Mrs. Musgrave! What do you mean? Why, you yourself assailed the whole crowd of them. You were the one to first point out their shortcom-

ings to me — things I didn't know — wouldn't have heard probably, from any one else. It — it seems to me that you have joined my antagonists."

Mrs. Harrison put her remark somewhat interrogatively. Then she surveyed her visitor closely.

"Emily," began Mrs. Musgrave slowly, "I can't stand with you against the whole set. I've got to have friends — goodness! But I'm so sorry this —"

"Good-day, Mrs. Musgrave," said Mrs. Harrison, rising and moving toward the door, where she remained standing. She glared into Mrs. Musgrave's eyes. The latter departed, smitten and routed. She walked down the stairs in a dismayed flutter.

"This is the end," muttered Mrs. Harrison at the bannisters upstairs as she heard the hall door close.

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Edward Harrison was summoned to his wife's room immediately upon his return home that night. She was propped up among pillows in a big arm chair, having just come out of a nervous chill, to the severity of which some heavy blankets and hot water bottles near at hand testified. Marie, her maid, was preparing an invalid's hot potion at a little side table.

"Have you had the doctor?" inquired Harrison anxiously, as he took his wife's hand.

"Doctor? No, I don't need a doctor. . . . You may go, Marie." She waited until the girl had left the room before she spoke again. Then she turned to her husband, who in the meanwhile had been taking her pulse. "Mrs. Musgrave was here this afternoon, Edward, and she gave me my finishing stroke. She was terrible!"

"I'll tighten a little on Mr. Musgrave for that, I guess," he said. His jaws were set.

"Oh, you needn't go to the bother. *I'm through with Telford City.* You must arrange to give up the town . . . if you care to be with me."

There had been few moments in Edward Harrison's life sufficiently perturbing to unsettle his nerves. But this one. His hand grasped the back of his wife's chair. A grayish hue overspread his face.

"Good Heaven, Emily, think of what you're saying! I can't go away from here. I'm tied to the town as no other man is. Two hundred men in office owe their bread to me. They look to me to keep them there by maintaining the organization, by leading the annual battles — and winning, winning. They subsist when I win; they starve when I lose — or are discharged. I tell you I can't do it. They're the men that helped make me what I am, and it is my duty to protect them. I can't leave these poor devils to the outcome of a scramble for

my power. Why, there'd be a half dozen ambitious men ready to fight to a finish for my empty shoes, and good-by organization then! . . . And further — I'm looking after some big fellows whom I probably haven't told you about — railroad and trolley and gas fellows. Where'd their stocks drop if some one else got hold of the levers of government that are now in my hands? I'm standing up for business and the business people against the cheap orators, and the civic meddlers who think wrecking is reform, and the Socialists, and the ladies with ideas five minutes old, and all the crazy isms of the times; and by God! I'm knocking down the whole pack of 'em every November election for the glory of sound government. . . . No, Emily, I can't cut myself away from Telford City."

"Edward," she replied, undaunted by his decisive manner, "couldn't you go away on a political mission and still maintain your connections with Telford City?"

"Political mission?"

"Yes. Don't you have Senators to go to Washington for a few years who still keep hold of affairs back home?"

"Oh, yes. Why?"

"Well, I'd like Washington, I think. When does the next Senator go?"

"Not for two years."

382 THE MAN WHO WON

"Mercy! I couldn't remain here that long. How about the governorship?"

"That's a year away."

"That's too long, too. What is there this year that would take you away from here?"

"Nothing but election to Congress, and I've promised the nomination to Henry Mulls — at your solicitation."

Mrs. Harrison's figure became fired with a sudden animation. Hope had succeeded distress in her wan face. She arose from her pillows and stood at her husband's side, an object of his amazement and concern.

"I withdraw my application in Henry Mulls' behalf," she said.

"But it's too late," he replied. "Henry has accepted."

"Then Henry must be sacrificed — or I, whichever you choose, for I give you my solemn word that I am going to leave Telford City."

"But I may not be elected?" he protested.

"Pshaw! Do you mean to say that you, who have elected dozens to office, cannot elect yourself?"

"That's just it. Political bosses don't run for office, Emily."

"Well, that's unfortunate. . . . You have my decision, however."

She returned to her chair and watched him composedly. Harrison attributed her manner to studied resignation, never to indifference. He lit a cigar and raised his face to the ceiling in his favorite attitude of thought. The smoke clung to his iron-gray hair and swirled gently about his forehead. At length he lowered his head.

"I guess," he said in his bold, strong tones, "poor Henry must be the sacrifice. It will be better to throw him overboard than for me to go away with you and desert the scores of men who are dependent on my leadership for everything they have. . . . Anyhow, a man has got to stand by his wife. I say, Emily, you didn't think I'd do it, now did you?"

"Edward, I knew you'd do a great deal for me."

"Well, so I would, my dear."

CHAPTER XXXI

CLASHES

A SUDDEN stir, unprecedented for these hot days of August, became noticeable about the offices of Edward Harrison. It began when half a dozen sharp-eyed, well-attired gentlemen with a manner denoting affairs, bustled into the Harrison suite, and were closeted with Mr. Harrison the elder — the younger Harrison being temporarily relieved of the prerogatives of his post. When these gentlemen had finished, it became known to Jack Harrison from their fervent confidences whispered to him that "the chief" must be made to stand for office. "We're trying to get him to run for Congress. The district wants him and needs him. Go in and see what you can do with him." Jack, of course, did not do so, but pondered over the unhappy fate of Henry Mulls, for whom he had always held a rather warm regard.

However, the sharp-eyed gentlemen aforesaid, having dispersed themselves among the community, there sprang up battalions of other gentle-

men not quite so well attired, but quite as intensely sharp-eyed — gentlemen distinctly political — who flocked through the Harrison doors with the noble aim of seeing what they “could do with him,” rumors having been spread that Edward Harrison was disinclined to accept the nomination. To overcome this negation by a physical showing of what the great public demanded as regarded Mr. Harrison’s future, these straw wisps of community sentiment continued to heap themselves up before his gaze.

“I shall announce my attitude later,” he declared to his callers. To his son he had said: “Take down these fellows’ names. We might need ’em to refer to — some time.”

Jack Harrison felt that he could date the “some time” with prophetic exactitude.

Thus far the public had no inkling of what was transpiring. The newspapers had printed nothing as the city editors did not give credence to the rumors. Bosses running for office in these enlightened days? No city editor would swallow such a yarn.

Within a few days publicity was given to the fact that a “testimonial dinner” was to be given in honor of Edward Harrison. This was deemed a normal sign of the popularity of his leadership among the stalwarts, and aroused no suspicion. A

886 THE MAN WHO WON

hall and a band were hired, and the other appurtenances of enthusiasm arranged for. Then a corp of ticketsellers was turned loose upon the city, and not a street escaped their combing. They possessed the fervor of dervishes, and trod many an unfriendly doorstep. One even sold a ticket to poor despoiled Henry Mulls. Even rosy first hopes were exceeded. The hall was cancelled and the Armory hired. The sale of tickets stopped three days before the event. Then people who previously hadn't the remotest desire to go, waxed feverish about the dinner. The seats were sold at a premium.

Harrison took his honors easily as became his stolid temperament. Calmly he watched the droves of men packing through the Armory doorways — heard his name roared thunderously to the rafters. The band was playing marches such as are set to the theme of the laudation of heroes like himself, but his pulses and his senses were pitched at absolute zero. To enthuse over the sights and the sounds was the privilege of other men.

When the speechmaking began, two or three out-of-town orators, who were better posted on the inner meaning of the event than the majority of the diners, hinted delicately that something of importance for Edward Harrison was in the air, and that whatever might befall him in further honors,

he would be found deserving and capable in an eminent degree. So the foundation for the evening's transcendent coup was laid.

Then rose Colonel Redway, the eloquent voice of the "organization." The Colonel began winningly. There was no necessity "stretching" facts in order to say agreeable things about Mr. Harrison, he declared. The truth itself would suffice. What Mr. Harrison had done for Telford City could be seen in its parks and streets and boulevards; what Mr. Harrison had done for the people of Telford City was written in the hearts of hundreds and hundreds of grateful citizens. "What do I mean by that?" the speaker asked smilingly, and applause began to ripple through the hall. "Well — come with me to Drummond's Flats or to The Curve or to the slums of the Eighth Ward — talk to the needy beings there — ask them, who gets them work, who sees to it that their sick are cared for, their dead buried, their orphans placed in kind hands? Ask them —" The Colonel could get no further. He had chosen his words too well. Applause shook the iron-ribbed building. His point had been well taken.

"Nor has his kindness been devoted solely to grimy unfortunates," resumed the Colonel a little later. "Are there not men here to-night who have him to thank for what they have and what they

are? Are there not men here to-night who would have been sorely tried by the world's buffetings but for his intervention? I for one can say that his friendship and his kindness have averted trials for me. . . . He is called a boss. He is a boss. We want him to be that. We turn in as a mass to give him power, and he converts it into benefactions for mankind."

Slowly, cautiously, the Colonel threaded his way to the momentous business of the night. The backers of the banquet were beginning to lean forward expectantly. The times were grave, said the Colonel. As never before was it necessary to send to the councils of the nation men whose qualities had been tried and found stable in lesser spheres. The war had brought about this change. Localities must give their best to the country. "Our glorious party," said the speaker, "asks that we of Telford City, who have loved this man and placed him in honor at our head, shall give him for the time being to the National Congress, there to —"

Colonel Redway spoke no more that night. He had accomplished his mission. The cat was out of the bag. The dinner and the fuss was explained. "Congress! Harrison for Congress!" was bel-
lowed from every part of the hall. The band broke into "The Star Spangled Banner." Men began to parade the aisles, shouting like bedlamites. Or-

derly seated squares disintegrated into a jammed mass of cheerers. The shoes of enthusiasts ravaged the white linen of tables. Harrison for Congress was a sentiment that thrilled to the marrow. For minutes the frenzy lasted, subsiding only when Edward Harrison was seen to rise and motion for order with his short Napoleonic arm.

He was, he said, carried away by this demonstration. He was powerless to express his gratitude, being possessed of no gift of speech. But he had this to say: he would never forget the good friends, the loyal friends who had brought the warmth of their affection to his heart this night. It was ever to be the happiest time of his life. Nor was he unmindful of the great honor which they sought to bestow upon him. For days he had been importuned to carry the standard of his party. He was disinclined to hold office — had always been, as was well known, but he felt that he could no longer disregard the summons of his fellow citizens. The people had drafted him to their cause, and he would submit to their will. What he had said was ample for his admirers. The man had accepted. He was safe, said the business men. As to the working fellows, their view of his fitness was summed up in the observation: "He's got a good heart."

The frenzied cohorts of Harrisonism, having sprung into one more spasm of ardor; the tables

having been pushed aside and the band having paraded the hall at the head of the diners; hands having been gripped and "Auld Lang Syne" sung. Colonel Redway arose from his seat, and declared the festivities at an end.

"Come here a moment," Harrison called to his son, who had been seated near him at the guests' table. "Jack, come down to the office early tomorrow morning. I want to chat with you about taking charge of my campaign in the town of Galeville."

The younger Mr. Harrison appeared strangely perplexed.

"Understand?" said Edward Harrison sharply.

"I'll be down early," replied the son. Jack Harrison's face turned pale.

Breakfast in the Lane apartments in the Mahoos County Court House was going along merrily. The sheriff was indulging in his boisterous morning drollery with his wife and daughter as victims. Suddenly, however, a cloud hovered on his brow.

"I knew it! By God! I knew it," he shouted hoarsely as he surveyed at arm's length the current issue of the Galeville *Star*, and in particular the column dealing with the launching of Edward Harrison's Congressional candidacy. "Look, Miss Alice, and see what fine friends the Harrisons are to

us," he said, handing the shaking paper over to her for perusal. "See their game, do you — now? Sent along this here young Harrison to win entrance into my home so's he could snoop around and find out things 'bout the jail. Now watch 'em tear me out, Miss! Jist watch 'em! You'll see the Telford City papers come out with stories 'bout the turr'ble conditions prevailin' under my 'ministration. See if the Galeville *Eagle* don't go to crackin' me in my own town. No, Miss, you wouldn't listen to me when I told you what this Harrison fellow was, and when I recommended Ralph Brewster. No, you must go to fallin' in love with the fust man that comes with play-actin' manners. Tut! tut! don't rear. That's jist what you've done. And how him and his father will laugh now that they've got the *insides* of this Court House for to publish your dad a scoundrel before the world. Oh, foolish, foolish girl!"

"Mr. John Harrison has taken part in no plot against us, I am sure," she said haughtily.

"No plot, eh? Did young Mr. Harrison in-form you that his father intended to run for Congress? Did we have even the remotest idea of it when we left him have the run of these premises? And wouldn't we have shut the the door in his face if we had known what was a-brewin'? . . . But he comes here no more. You are done for good and

842 THE MAN WHO WON

all with your Mister Pretty — one consolation. And now we have to turn for p'tection from this oncoming scandal to Ralph Brewster, the true friend of our family, the one you tho't wasn't wuth your notice. But who is the man now — Ralph Brewster or John Harrison, please?"

"The man is John Harrison . . . and I've had enough breakfast."

"Ho! He is, eh? Listen to her, mama. 'Fatuated with him. A darter of ours the town's talk. And you think maybe he'll marry you, Miss? And you were three weeks at Siatuxit and never met his step-mother, nor his father, nor set foot in their summer cottage. What has he done but come here and spark — and spy? Has he taken you round 'mong his city friends? I ain't heard no hints anywhere that you and him are promised. No one understands it that way. Myself, I haven't seen nothin' but one-sided calf's moonin' — with him collectin' facts with his eyes and his ears 'round here, and you sighin' to be a Harrison and go to the sea-shore summers. Where's your spirit and your pride, girl? — to let a man make a fool of —"

She closed the door upon him, and went to her room.

The corridors leading to Edward Harrison's business, or rather, political suite were thronged with

individuals having errands and missions directly related to Mr. Harrison's new interests. Everywhere in the city was begun a ceaseless, systematic booming of his merits. Church groups were already hearkening to his wily vassals. Labor leaders were beginning to "agitate" in his favor among the members of the local unions. Storekeepers were dropping broad hints to their clerks that Harrison in Congress would mean brisk business and *steady employment*. Manufacturers were passing a beneficent Harrisonian word to the superintendents and foremen. Banks were for Harrison, hospitals were for Harrison, the jails — both back and front of bars — were for Harrison.

Of course, there were many, many people who were not for Harrison — who objected to his yoke and his rule. There were people who were against him irrevocably for party reasons. How many were opposed to Harrison, the evening of Election Day alone could tell. It was a truism of politics that a boss couldn't win. Yet Harrison had set himself the task of disproving it. He knew that the majority of persons of weight in the community were with him. But what of the mass of citizens, the grim, unspeaking, ruling Vote? Humph!

When Jack Harrison arrived at his father's office, the waiting crowd started a lively hum of interest.

844 THE MAN WHO WON

Burly ward men, foreigners, and distinctly genteel individuals who were holding themselves aloof from the loud-talking groups, made point to extend the greetings of the morning to young Mr. Harrison. When the Congressman-prospective arrived a few minutes later, there was lusty cheering and scattered "'Ray for Harrison!" yells, and desultory "tigers." Mr. Harrison bowed, shook hands with several of the men and entered his inner sanctum.

"Jack . . . I want you to open up in the *Eagle* on that old hypocrite, Seth Lane, who'll be nominated without opposition," said Edward Harrison — his first words as he closed the door. "You know the facts about him — shaving the county allowance for prisoners' means, petty graft on supplies, packing the jail with vagrants to increase his profits, and general corruption in office. You've got that *Eagle* in pretty fair screaming shape now. So let me hear him scream next issue. Huh, Jack?"

The younger Mr. Harrison, wilted and bowled out in spirit up to this very point, here marshalled all of his resources of revolt.

"I can't attack Sheriff Lane — on — on account of Alice," he said, sternly.

Edward Harrison rolled his cigar in his mouth. He was unaroused, apparently not even surprised.

"Are you and she engaged?"

"You might call it that," replied Jack.

"You might!" the father repeated. "Well, are you?"

"Yes."

Edward Harrison bit his cigar furiously. It was a rare mood for this paragon of composure,—and a menacing one.

"See here, sir! — I'm headed for Congress, and it's going to be a tight squeeze for me. I can't afford to lose the smallest point. The *Galeville Eagle* is my legitimate weapon, and I can't permit you to disarm me on account of an affair with a girl. Mrs. Harrison, who put me into this fight, comes first, and your fiancée's interests must be waved aside until this fight is over. I have no objection to Miss Lane, but politics is war, and she must abide by its cruelties if her father chooses to present himself again for public office. He has a bad record. If he wishes to protect his daughter's feelings, let him withdraw. Now I want no more argument with you, sir, about this matter. Call Jim Fulton."

"Just a minute," interposed Jack Harrison. "I don't agree with you about the part the *Eagle* is to play in this campaign. I am not going to attack Sheriff Lane."

"You're not? Well, then, sir, you step down from the editorship, and some one else will."

"I'm going to hold on to the editorship and to my half-ownership with Mr. Woods."

"You have no half-ownership. You have nothing. I gave you fourteen hundred dollars to acquire a half-interest in the paper and pay its debts — *for me*. You acted as my secretary, my agent in the transaction of acquiring the property, and as my representative and agent in managing it. Now I choose to relieve you of your position. Can anything be simpler than that?"

"But you said you'd give me that half-interest outright, and the ownership is recorded in my name. Can anything be simpler than that?"

"Well, sir, I withdraw my gift — this is for your private information. And within forty-eight hours I'll find a Court to say that it was never a gift. Then you'll see who will have charge of the warming of Seth Lane. . . . You can go. This disobedience finishes us. The Union Hotel is a good place to stop at. I'll see to your board until — until you get some other employment."

Edward Harrison rang for Jim Fulton and the colloquy was at an end. With his brain in a daze, Jack Harrison walked through the pressing crowd at the doors and corridors to the street.

CHAPTER XXXII

AT THE RIVER

FACE to face with his fate was Jack Harrison. His father had ordered his expulsion from their mutual business relations. This dictum was mandatory upon him so far as the office secretaryship was concerned. There was no contesting that point. But there remained the question of the *Galeville Eagle*. Was he to cut his connection with that beloved activity upon the strength of his father's words?

Jack put in a dingy, fevered morning over his troubles while walking the streets. The approach of an interurban electric suggested a variation of his misery and he hopped aboard for Galeville. It was a cool, dry, bleak day, a day of autumn rather than of waning summer—a day to lower one's spirits. The sky was a dull, cold gray. The distant fields and hills had lost their lustrous green. Harrison's heart sank and sank as he beheld the somber prospect. Bounding hedges and fences seemed panoramic repetitions of his own miseries.

848 THE MAN WHO WON

Even the racking and jolting of the car was a woe-ful melody. Never had his soul been weighted so heavily.

The street door of the *Eagle* office stood open. Mr. Woods was in charge upstairs, he concluded. True, he soon found, Mr. Woods was upstairs. But in charge was Cyril Curtis, of the Telford City *Inquirer*, holding the mandate of Edward Harrison. Standing by to give strength and permanency to that possession was Jim Fulton, Edward Harrison's gorilla.

"Well — we've taken hold," snapped Curtis, a little man of brisk speech, whom fortuitous circumstance had picked up from the copy desk of the *Inquirer*, and given reins of rule over the *Eagle* — in satisfaction of his life's craving to sit in authority somewhere. "We don't want trouble, Mr. Harrison, but —" Curtis looked confidently in the direction of Jim Fulton's impressive bulk, and smiled.

"Tush! tush! Curtis," reproved Jim Fulton, who had tender spots like all big men.

"You fellows settle who owns *your* half of the business," put in Mr. Woods. "It doesn't matter to me as long as you don't disturb my half."

So it didn't matter to Woods, whose children had been fed by his bounty during the dark weeks, Woods, whose wife had lavished *God bless yours*

out of number upon the younger Harrison! Jack Harrison was dumbfounded. Woods, who could have prodigiously aided him in making a fight to maintain his proprietorship in the *Eagle*, stood a cold neutral.

Big Jim Fulton stepped forward. At least he had the dignity of size. The inadequacy of Mr. Curtis was never more apparent. Such a manikin was unsuited to the work in hand. Jim Fulton, who had been commissioned to merely furnish brawn, here undertook to furnish brain.

"Guess me and Mr. Harrison Junior kin a'just this pop'ision. Step into the hallway with me — John — a moment," said Jim with a clumsy flourish of courtesy. "Look here, John," he continued, bracing a huge foot against the hallway door as a guaranty of privacy. "What's the use? Uh? The Court has been seen, and if you fuss up there will be plenty of law. You know the game's 's I do. A man who puts judges into jobs kin git judges to *lean* a little when it comes to such a triflin' matter as the Galeville *Eagle*. Of course you could go to the opp-sition papers and make a clean exposay of your father, and the courts, and c'ruption,—but would you? What's the use of airin' family troubles? If you make him out a — er — crook, you taint your own blood, don't you? . . . Now then, your dad has got you hipped so far as

controllin' this *Eagle* is concerned, and your cue is to stay down until election is over, and — then watch the weather soften! But for Gard's sakes! don't pull any reform stuff, and go for to expose your dad. That's all right for books and plays where the *Son's* conscience and love of justice demands that he shall put the world wise to his daddy, but it ain't human, and it ain't *you*. I never heard you utter a word of reform in your life. Fight in the family, I say, but for Gard's sakes don't let the public onto a word of it. Be organization — and take your beatin'."

"I'm not quitting because I'm afraid to fight, but because I don't want to show up my own father. To win out, I'd have to drag him in the mud. Tell him that, Jim."

"Ugh! That's sassy," replied Fulton with a shrug.

"Jim — that's my message," said Jack Harrison, as he walked down the stairs to the street.

Ousted! Deprived of livelihood. Profession gone. Yet the day had been one of so many bitter trails that this latest blow lost much of its poignancy. Woods' attitude, his father's ruthlessness, the thoughts of the uncharted future, were lumped in a sickening sense of ruin. Only one thing else could be added to the sum of his mis-

fortunes — the loss of Alice Lane. And this, too, he resolved to lose. What right had he to trifle away her years of beauty and opportunity,— he, an unemployed helpless outcast from his father's house? . . . Yes, he would be game — a man at least, and release her. Then . . . there was New York to go to, and his few hundred dollars would tide him over until he obtained a position. He would work for subsistence; but for ambition, recoupment? — his soul was dead to these.

He went to a telephone and called up Alice. She replied that she was coming down town, and would meet him at their old trysting drug store.

She was pale and haggard, he saw,—a point that he did not lose. An uneasiness born of a notion that from her, too, he was to hear devastating tidings, came over him. What a vile, day, this! Blow following blow, misfortunes galloping in fours!

They walked countryward — silent for a while. Although there was the nip of autumn in the air, summer's nasturtiums and asters were at their prettiest in the little front gardens.

Soon they were out of the region of gardens and dwellings, and were treading a macadam road past nodding acres of corn, and growing fields soon to be given over to the harvester's steel, and wayside brooks with their quaint old culverts, and many

an enchanting copse and meadow nook. Then they came to the river shore with its path trailing over dank lowlands. Berried dogwoods and black alders lined the way. Creeper and clematis were under foot. The river was coming down with blackish sweep, foul with factory dyes and coal dust. Mystery and death and doom were on the tongue of those waters. . . . Heart longings were drifting away; downstream were going sunny hopes and dreams and plannings. Pitiless black river —

Alice Lane was weeping. They stopped beside an old, crumbling wharf, overrun with moss and poke-weed. They had spoken only a few words on their walk. The gloom of the day had deepened their gloom. And now she could no longer withstand the oppression of her thoughts. . . . He took her hand and pressed it. But he had not the heart or spirit to retain it in his clasp. His mission was not love-making. The day for that had gone. He stood looking down the river. The sobs cut him — each one. His heart surged pity; but necessity held the expression of it unspoken. He had nothing to give her in words, no promises, no hopes. Alice wept for several minutes. Finally she grew calm; drew nearer him and laid hold of his arm affectionately.

“John, it is terrible. . . . Father said I’m not to see you again. But of course I shall see you —

whenever, whenever you wish. We are to be the same." . . . She stopped, noting a changing, ominous look upon his face. "If you care to," she added, falteringly.

"Alice, we cannot be as we were; not because of what you have told me, but because of what has happened to me. My father has stripped me of the *Eagle* — turned me out. I stood for protecting your father from attack. . . . They are to attack me now. I'm on my own resources, in consequence, and they are poor ones. I must begin at something new — away from here. I must not think of holding you to —"

"Are you saying this to be rid of me? . . . I have been told that you would give me up."

"I must give you up, Alice. I have nothing — am nobody. I am going away —"

"So that is the way the Harrisons play their game? Sir, you will please permit me to walk back alone."

He endeavored to hold her, to placate her, but she wrenched herself out of his hands and walked back over the path. The alders soon enveloped her.

Harrison remained on the wharf, looking at the portentous black river.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE HONOR OF A HARRISON

JACK HARRISON was marooned in absolute idleness upon a busy world. He had moved his belongings from his home, and had gone to a two-room apartment instead of taking domicile at the Hotel Union as his father's pensioner. With Jack it must be a case of slender living. His little store of cash would not stand the siege of unemployment for any length of time. He resolved, however, to continue sending the weekly allowance to the servant Mary. He must obtain work. But where? He knew a hundred men who would employ him as his father's son. But as his father's son disowned? And what were his capacities? Not very much besides a little ability to write. Well, he must get work, and the field must be far away from home.

Harrison first tried New York, the refuge and vague hope of the disappointed in all walks. On several trips he called at the newspaper offices and had his name taken — he would receive word later.

THE HONOR OF A HARRISON 355

Then, returning home, he waited half-heartedly for the letter that should summon him to at least one of these places of employment.

The days and weeks sped on. The flowers had gone. In the air was the excitement of the coming election. Harrison squadrons and Lane squadrons were flying about the counties, appealing, exhorting, burning fireworks, dispensing free drinks, and doing whatever else was calculated to produce votes. Banners bearing caricatures of the candidates flapped across the highways. Placards bearing the features of Messrs. Harrison and Lane appeared in countless stores and house windows. Boys were on the thoroughfares distributing handbills. The newspapers were filled with abuse, exposures and defenses. And the electorate thrilled at each new sensation.

In Galeville, Sheriff Lane was receiving a tri-weekly bastinado from the *Eagle*, a scourging so thorough and explicit as to his official misdoings that the townsmen gave interested attention; and Alice Lane kept to the house from shame. Mr. Brewster's *Star* met each charge with an emphatic denial, or, in the case of the more convincing accusations, with palliative explanations. The county had been niggardly; the jail was a miserable unsanitary hole; its demerits and its needs had been charged up against Sheriff Lane; bad plumbing

856 THE MAN WHO WON

and draughts and damps and jail illness must, of course, be taken out of the sheriff's hide, etc. So ran the defense. Brewster also directed his rhetoric upon Edward Harrison's record as a boss, and called down upon his head the vengeance of the churches and all selfrespecting citizens.

Who would win? Sunday wiseacres were computing the majorities. The consensus of opinion favored Sheriff Lane despite his known faults. Harrison had never run for office; Lane had been a victor repeatedly. Furthermore, by a singular distribution of the vote in the three counties comprising the Congressional district, Lane's party had for years proved winner in these Congressional fights. So Sheriff Lane would win by a small majority — thus the wiseacres prophesied. Edward Harrison, alert, slaving day and night, utilizing every fiber of support in the district, declared that no Seth Lane would top him with votes upon the first Tuesday in November.

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There came no call for Jack Harrison from New York's imposing journals. With the passing of the weeks he marked this hope as dead. He must turn elsewhere. His bank account was undergoing sore depletion. A few more months of such a profitless existence and he would be a pauper. He remembered that two or three of his acquaintances

THE HONOR OF A HARRISON 857

had newspaper connections. He would write to Talbot on the Pacific Coast, and Young at Omaha. He sent away the letters and felt a shade more cheerful.

At last Harrison received an inspiring reply from Talbot offering a position not much in the way of a salary, but still a golden something. Harrison wired back acceptance and packed his belongings. He had but one matter of business to attend to — winding up of the affairs of Harrison & Woods, former proprietors of the Galeville *Eagle*.

When he arrived in Galeville, Jack found the town in the thralls of the Harrison-Lane contest. It was the Saturday night before election, and the campaign managers were getting in their last licks — bands, orators, handbills, horns, extras, cheers, and gibes. The farmers from the surrounding country had come in for the sights. A great crowd was skylarking along the streets.

In the *Eagle* office, earnest adherents of the Harrison side were promulgating their notions of affairs with a freedom and a clamor admissible only in such a surcharged atmosphere. Jack Harrison's arrival caused new excitement in the group. They were men whom he had known quite well; they knew vaguely from the town talk that he had given up the *Eagle*, and had "gone into something else."

"Where're you located, Mr. Harrison?" asked one.

"Why — I'm going West to-morrow."

"And not vote? Gee!"

Harrison's business with Mr. Woods took ten minutes, and he was soon in the streets again, drifting through the crowd. This was to be his last night in these surroundings of home; not a soul to bid him good-by — dread, bitter thought!

He leaned against a post, forlorn. A Harrison cavalcade swept by, and for a brief moment he beheld his father in an automobile hedged around by big guns. Jack moved downstreet and stood by a darkened doorway. Soon a crowd began to pack around him; fresh cheering broke forth, and a great procession of Lane's motors came down Main Street. Sheriff Lane, the candidate, stood up in one of the machines, his fat, moist face a greenish hue in the torchlight. He was smiling in easy confidence on home soil — and he had received some hard buffetings these past weeks in other sections of the district.

"I don't care two cents 'bout goin' down to Washin'ton, fellow citizens," said Lane, addressing the crowd, "either for the honor or the sal'ry. But why I do wish to win is for to vindicate my repertation and standin', which, up 'til now, has not been crossed by so much as a shadder of sus-

THE HONOR OF A HARRISON 359

picion. And who, please, says these hard things 'bout me which you have no doubt read? Edward Harrison, my antag'nist. Boss Harrison, no more, no less. He is the man who has en-slaved Telford City, and who now wants to en-slave you. He begins by tryin' to make you dissatisfied with your tried 'ficials, men who have lived 'mong you for years . . . tries to make you dissatisfied with us, and charges us with not mere faults but crimes, CRIMES! Are you goin' to stand this? Are you goin' to let him come over into this respectable community and dirty it up with such scandal as has been printed? — accusations where I starved the pris'ners, accusations where I brought in tramps to fill up the cells and make blood money out of human bein's. Why, gentulmun, if I could put goodness into the human heart, I would throw open the doors of the County Jail to-night and say to those pris'ners: 'Brothers, go forth and sin no more.' . . . No, I don't put no young boys behind bars —"

Jack Harrison remembered the little chap bound for Portland whom Sheriff Lane had packed off to the jail. Harrison wormed his way out of the mass of spectators and walked on. A cold mist was settling upon the streets. A sense of chill took hold of him, to which was added a feeling of loneliness and desolation. Then rose thoughts of the

coming days when he would be among strangers, he, who had known a cozy home hearth, friends, pleasant pursuits, and the love of an exceptional girl. He was passing Miller's, the old, familiar drug store of his courting days. Harrison stopped short. He would have his good-by—and with Some one! The consequences? What cared he?

He walked into the drug store to the telephone booth. A moment later Alice Lane's voice was on the wire.

"I wanted to say good-by, that is all. . . . I'm going to leave for the West to stay."

"Oh!" She gave a little shriek. He waited long throbbing moments for her reply. The wires hummed. Still not a word from her.

"Won't you say good-by?" he asked. "We were so much to—"

"Is it really true . . . that you are to leave, *Mr. Harrison?*"

"Why, did you think —"

"Mr. Harrison, if you're really going, and — and if —"

"Alice, listen! I haven't spoken to my father in weeks. . . . I haven't been living home. . . . I'm going to a place on the Pacific Coast to work for twenty dollars a week."

"Oh, what have I done to you? You must come here . . . before you go."

THE HONOR OF A HARRISON 861

"I start to-morrow."

"Heavens! Then come to-night."

"Your father —"

"I'm not thinking of him. Come!"

A sad pair was sitting in the parlor of the Court House. Without further words from him Alice realized what had been the exact sum of his sacrifice: that he had given up career and home rather than turn the *Galeville Eagle* against her father, against herself. He grew a finer man than she had ever realized. She had judged him hastily, cruelly. The day of her unjust condemnation loomed vivid to her — she saw him on the river bank thinking of her bitter words, a heart-heavy, bruised unfortunate to whose load of tribulation she had added additional burdens. Harrison was an odd, quixotic youth, doing noble deeds and being misunderstood for his actions. There was not the least doubt of it now: love for her had led him into his present unhappy course. Why was he, a son of prestige and power, adrift upon the world to-day? Surely this was love. This analysis of his actions appeared to her to be very simple and acceptable. It explained everything, even his effort to release her from participation in his poverty. She could see that his attitude was an elevated one, although operating cruelly upon her. She would dare pov-

362 THE MAN WHO WON

erty with him. There was no pain or penalty to that. She drew a little nearer to him.

"Must we part, John, without some little understanding — some little hope?" she asked in a voice quite broken with feeling.

"You speak of hope. But there is none."

"No advancement where you are going?"

"Possibly in the years. But that, too, is a gamble. . . . I won't tie you down to my prospects. I must insist on that."

She remained quiet — chilled, baffled. It was the lowest moment in her life. Whatever anguish she had previously known was as nothing to this. Harrison arose, but Alice remained seated. He laid his hand lightly upon her shoulder. She raised her head and stared at him with tears in her eyes. Watching her face, he noticed her eyes shift suddenly, dilate; she half-rose from her chair — and shrieked!

Standing in the room beyond, with the door leading to the cells wide open, were scores of prisoners. It was a dirty haggard crew with hunger marks upon them. For a moment they stood there blinking at the lights; then they came forward, crowding into the parlor. They were moving about softly; not one of them had spoken. Only half way to liberty, — they were acting with preconceived caution against alarms.



“ IT WAS A DIRTY, HAGGARD CREW ”



THE HONOR OF A HARRISON 368

A thickset, bull-necked, somewhat dwarfish fellow stepped from the ranks of the motley group.

"Harrison, git us the key to this side door. We're goin' out."

Jack Harrison recognized Frank Saunders, a Mahoos County crook who was awaiting trial for burglary. Saunders was smiling at him in friendship, a broken hellish smile. "Boys," continued Saunders, "He'll get us the key. He's a Harrison, and *in the job*."

Job!

So Edward Harrison, candidate, was at the bottom of this jail-delivery, timed for the eve of election, and to be characterized as a "hunger" revolt in order to emphasize Sheriff Lane's maladministration. In a flash Jack Harrison comprehended the whole affair. His presence at the very gate of escape had been construed by Saunders as an adroit and necessary part of the business.

"Come, git a move on, Harrison. Git 's the key," snapped Saunders.

The key to the steel door hung in a cabinet on the wall, one among a score of similar keys. Harrison frequently had opened the door with it when leaving Alice Lane. He went to the cabinet, took the key, and then walked toward the door. There was now a hum of excitement among the prisoners, all intent upon the escape.

364 THE MAN WHO WON

"So you are a plotter . . . a lying hypocrite, Mr. Harrison."

Alice Lane stood in the middle of the floor, her fright in control, her anger and scorn in each word.

"Yes, I'm in the plot . . ." he said, standing by the door, and swinging the key on his finger, ". . . this much."

With a sudden quick lunge, he kicked out a pane of glass in one of the long barred windows, and cast the key through the aperture into the darkness beyond. "Now let's see you fellows get it," he said, facing Saunders and the other prisoners with livid, set features.

Rufus Wilmot, night keeper, bruised, battered, disarmed, limped into the room.

"By George! Mr. Harrison, that was great. . . . Git back to your cells, you dogs!"

The "dogs" instead, rushed forward, pushing Harrison and Wilmot against the wall. Harrison struck out as best he could, but he was overborne and held, helpless, by a dozen hands. His cheek bones ached from the pummeling of hard fists, and his lip was bleeding. Still he smiled impudently at the assailing mob — remembering the key that lay out in the darkness. He even smiled upon Alice Lane; a victorious smile.

The minutes were flying. The prisoners tried other keys in vain; had assailed the door with their

THE HONOR OF A HARRISON 365

weight and found that steel was not to be rammed in this fashion. Then they returned to Harrison. A blow — two, three, spun his senses awlirl. He staggered amidst the press of their bodies — heard the breaking of furniture — and fell. For a moment of ages he was down, taking kicks and tramlplings. Then, suddenly, the legs around him stood still; a free vent was made for him; somebody was lifting him to his feet.

Through the aperture in the window pane, made by Harrison's foot, protruded the revolver of Sheriff Seth Lane.

The prisoners, mute, sheepish, fell back to the door. The sheriff, with his key, entered through the side door. With him were a dozen of his partisans.

"What's this here?" he bellowed.

Saunders stepped forward.

"The Harrisons framed it," he said.

"They did, eh? Then I'll arrest you, John Harrison," said the sheriff.

"Why — father — he prevented these men from getting out. He threw the key out on the lawn," shrieked Alice. "You —"

"No matter," interrupted the excited sheriff. "This is an election trick. It comes from the Harrison camp, and I'm goin' to clap this here Harrison behind bars. I'm playing politics,

too." He grinned in his joy of smart retaliation.

"You arrest John Harrison, She'ff?" asked Rufus Wilmot quietly.

"I do."

"Then . . . I arrest you, Seth Lane, by right of law con-ferred 'pon coroners to arrest she'ffs."

"Arrest me? What have I done?" yelled the sheriff, now that the coroner had laid formal hold of his coat.

"C'rruption and misconduct in office, She'ff, and I kin prove it — from what I've seen right in this here jail."

The sheriff summoned a sickly smile to mantle his terror.

"Rufus, don't be foolish. I'm not goin' to *hold* Harrison. I was only a-scairin' him. . . . John Harrison, you git out'r here quick's ever you kin."

Rufus released the sheriff. The latter opened the steel door for Harrison to pass out. For a moment Jack stood looking at Alice. For a moment, too, she was restrained by the memory of her bitter denunciation of him. Suddenly she rushed forward holding him by the two arms.

"Good-by, John," she said. "I've lost a good man . . . in you." He pressed her to him silently. Then she broke out of his arms and ran from the room.

THE HONOR OF A HARRISON 867

"Well — see this door, don't you?" called the sheriff impatiently.

With his head high, Harrison walked into the darkness.

"Say, Mr. Harrison," shouted Coroner Wilmot, "I'll be down to Telford City railrud station to-morrer mornin' to see you off."

Jack turned in the darkness, and faced the little battered man in the doorway.

"All right, Rufus," he answered. "I'll be glad to have you see me off. I guess you'll be the only one. . . . And thanks for *to-night*."

CHAPTER XXXIV

DEFEAT FOR THE VICTOR

News of the attempted jail delivery did not reach the ears of the public or get to the papers that night because Sheriff Lane bound all to secrecy. The suppression of the sensation was a tactful act on his part. Having not had time to measure the net political significance of the event, the sheriff thought best to face the facts with the fresh judgment of a new day. Perhaps he might conclude to keep the affair quiet until after election. He was, as yet, too confused to decide whether the event would make him a hero or a knave. At any rate, Monday was time enough to give out a well-considered version to the public.

Sunday being a long day and an idle day, a secret so weighty had small chance of surviving whole. Toward afternoon whispers dealing with the attempted delivery were being exchanged on the Galeville streets. Some citizens even strolled out to the Court House, and gaped at the jail walls and windows with much the attitude of expecting to see

DEFEAT FOR THE VICTOR 369

breaches in the masonry and rifts in the bars. When evening came Sheriff Lane was admitting reporters. Edward Harrison's campaign managers had the elder Harrison himself on the wire. "Deny for me," he said, "any complicity in this thing. My son, John Harrison, prevented the success of the prisoners' plan. That's the proof. Now knock this into a statement for the press."

In his library Edward Harrison was considering the situation. A "hunger" break would have been a telling thing against the defenses of Seth Lane. Alas! Jack Harrison's intervention had prevented such a happy culmination, and, in turn, the prisoners now were laying the plot upon Edward Harrison's shoulders. Luckily, Jack Harrison's act had despoiled this accusation of its force. Yet many would believe the jailbirds' tale. The elder Harrison feared this. Eventually he worked himself into quite a raging state, one minute blaming his son and the next believing that Jack had really served him.

A hearth fire was going for Mrs. Harrison's comfort. She was crouched and shuddering, the shade of spirited Emily Graydon. She had become the constant concern of her husband. His other interests had fallen below this one in gravity. Politics — power — now amounted to merely instrumentalities to take her away from Telford City — to Wash-

870 THE MAN WHO WON

ington. That this frail invalid might have her wish scores upon scores of men were fuming and sweating and lying and fighting in the counties of Mahoos, Keaslake, and Adams.

Heavy hours yet intervened before Edward Harrison would know his fate — her fate.

"I must go up to headquarters a little while, Emily, but I'll hurry back as soon as I can," he said, as he kissed her.

"All right," she said, looking intently at the fire.

"And at eight-thirty — your medicine, dear," he reminded.

"Medicine! That is all one has to think of in this place. I was always well until I came here. Never wept — no nerves. It's killing me — this town, these people! Just keep me here a while longer, and see what'll happen to me."

"Shall I stay home with you to-night, Emily? I can stay."

"No, you go to headquarters . . . where you're needed."

He went away with a sense of uneasiness.

Monday's newspapers printed "spread head" articles regarding the outbreak at the jail according to their political particular bias. The Harrison sheets gave publicity to the fact of John Harrison's attentions to the sheriff's daughter: a romantic, disarm-

DEFEAT FOR THE VICTOR 871

ing touch. John Harrison was suitably praised for his conduct through which the honor of the family of Lane had been saved by the family of Harrison. All of these "stories" set up an imposing background of innocence for Harrison senior.

The Lane papers cried: "Jail plot!"; named Edward Harrison as its instigator; but admitted that the escape of the prisoners was thwarted by young Harrison. And why not, it was asked. Were not the father and the son estranged? Was not the young man turned out of his secretaryship and his editorship, and banished from home? Was young Harrison not this minute embarked on a journey to new employment in the West?

And Jack Harrison was a hero no matter which way the argument fell.

Both camps realized that second attacks, printed on the day of election, were practically valueless. The public was a little bewildered, and fell back on issues clearer cut. Edward Harrison suffered a twinge or two when the private relations of himself and his son were aired so accurately. But the hours were filled with duties too momentous to permit him to dwell long upon his personal matters.

With the very voting about to begin, innumerable things had to be done. There were men to be sent forth on foot and on wheel — grim, dependable individuals — who were to meet in private the tried

372 THE MAN WHO WON

fellows of the wards and precincts and country divisions; to pass forward into these latter hands snug little wads of green and yellow backs to be used to convince the irresolute, variable portion of voters that Mr. Harrison should properly sit in the Congress of the United States. There were also men to be sent forth — hale roistering chaps — to make a final tour of the saloons, setting up drinks for those who would accept, in honor of Mr. Harrison, the candidate. And there were to be wind-up rallies, and parades and the last careful canvassings of all the wards. Harrison's system of canvass was a matter of square inches.

Monday was work; with Tuesday came battle. Before dawn the Harrison watchers were on guard at the polling places, every man with his voters' list, and his emergency cash, darting hawk glances up and down streets for prey — and police. Every voting place in Telford City was overrun with Harrison henchmen; and in every other part of the Congressional district his representatives were likewise on hand. Organization was delivering huge strokes for Harrison to-day. Sheriff Lane's cause was not nearly so well manned. Most of those who did serve him did it for party and not for Lane. The sheriff was a dwindling personage within the fold. The meannesses charged against him by his enemies were begun to be credited by his friends. On the

DEFEAT FOR THE VICTOR 378

other hand, Harrison's imperfections, whatever they might be, were such as did not touch his generosity, that trait which sustains the political boss in the public regard in the face of a troop of offenses.

Before the day had far gone, it was apparent that there was a pronounced trend toward Harrison in the vote. Farmers — Lane's reliance — were remaining at home in the country districts: a dire omen for him. And the city sections were turning out big for Harrison. Out among the Telford City factories where Harrison's "philanthropy" had been a fixed theme these years, laboring men were voting their gratitude or admiration into the boxes. And there was a movement on the part of Business, too, to aid him. Business, down to its clerks and counter-men, threw in scores of Harrison ballots. Even the sordid fellows of easy purchase declared that of the two candidates, greater respectability was on the side of Mr. Harrison, and that they were for him — at the standard price of barter. Harrison's lieutenants bought and plead, plead and bought throughout the day, daring prison bars for the friendship of this man. Many of Lane's own party workers let out hints that they would shed no tears over the sheriff's defeat. The sheriff's rapacities had written his doom. Friend and neighbor turned from him to the lesser bane —

874 THE MAN WHO WON

and supported Mr. Harrison. A Harrison wave billowed across the three counties.

By ten o'clock at night, with half the precincts in, Edward Harrison left headquarters and rode to his home a victor.

It was cold and crisp. As he rode along a feeling of new fire and being surged through him. He had accomplished what was to bring about his happiness — Washington! There was a strange sweetness in the word: the cure of all his troubles. Mrs. Harrison would have her wish! The prize was at her feet. Life's best award had come to him. What he craved he had obtained. His career had flowered into this might of personal grandeur. . . . A crowd on a street corner cheered as he passed. Men and boys were rushing to the roadway now, and marching — carrying red fire and Harrison banners. Soon they would be seeking him. He called to the chauffeur to go faster. His breast was heavy with the great tidings.

At the door the butler congratulated him. "We've all heard the good news. Mrs. Harrison had us calling headquarters every ten minutes," he said.

Edward Harrison smiled at this solicitude of his wife.

"Where is Mrs. Harrison?" he asked as he took off his coat.

DEFEAT FOR THE VICTOR 375

"She went out half an hour ago — with the black bag," answered the butler.

"Her black bag? God!" He grasped the servant's arm madly. "Why didn't you let me know about this?"

"I thought —"

Harrison leaped up the stairs to her room. A few drawers were in disorder, but very little else was turned about. She had left behind things unbelievable — jewelry, a purse containing his latest check, her wedding ring, and a little white note folded neatly upon a tray:

EDWARD:

We should never have married. Even Washington cannot compensate for that mistake. Don't try to follow me. I shall never join you again.

EMILY.

He sank into a chair. To coalesce fifty-four and thirty-two had proven to be impossible. A vast crowd was in front of the house now, roaring cheers for the Congressman-elect.

"Tell them I'm not at home," said Harrison, a haggard, heart-stricken man.

Emily Graydon had dealt him disaster for which there was no recompense. Edward Harrison, victor, had lost.

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In the new park section of Telford City, among the homes of the fortunate in trade, H. Storridge had erected a brick and plaster chalet, and conferred it with his blessing upon his son Jason and the bride, Muriel.

On Saturday nights Papa and Mama Storridge came to tea, at which time there was a standing order in the pantry to keep out the liquors. On Wednesday nights Papa and Mama Clayton came, and the orders were to bring in the liquors. Mr. Clayton had become ruddy-colored, although Mrs. Clayton would have it that the apoplectic red and blue of her husband's face was due to the sun and wind — "builders, you know, are so much exposed," etc. . . . The senior Storridges and the senior Claytons never met; a matter of mutual understanding and joy.

Jason was leading an even domestic existence now, coming home at fixed hours with quite a pride and strut — to carve, and have his claret, and order in more of that Turkish coffee. Sometimes at noon he would telephone to "the works" that he was through for the day. Then he would escort Muriel to wherever she thought her gown and furs of the day should be taken and shown. Jason's friends said he had settled down; in reality he was experimenting with domesticity as a very interesting toy.

One day Matilda Mulls called — an unhappy,

DEFEAT FOR THE VICTOR 377

soured creature who had not yet attained "anything" worth while in matrimonial prospect. Matilda admired and envied and sighed. Mrs. Clayton was on hand, exhibiting the glories of the establishment — the chairs of Aubusson tapestry, the Mennoyer prints, the carved Brittany beds. Upon these Mrs. Clayton expatiated with the pride of a mother-in-law.

"Look at this stuff on the window-seat — velvet, Matilda," she said, passing her fingers over its surface. . . . "And I'd like to have what those walls cost, alone. Eh, Matilda?"

"Very beautiful," admitted Matilda.

She took a seat upon a brocaded sofa which Mrs. Clayton had requested her to "try." Tea and cakes were served. Then the electric lights were turned on to supplement a brilliant day. The new Storridges were always adding to that which was already sufficient.

"Eva Wilcox *announced* yesterday," stated Matilda.

"She did? To whom?" Mrs. Clayton asked.

"A Mr. Knowles of New York. She met him at Siatuxit this summer. I think Jack Harrison introduced them."

"Jack Harrison — um!" ejaculated Muriel. "I suppose you've heard, Matilda? Mrs. Harrison has —"

"Skipped? Oh, certainly. Who hasn't heard that?"

"But the papers haven't printed a word," pointed out Muriel.

"No, because Mr. Harrison won't admit that she's gone for good," explained Matilda. "But just wait, when a few weeks more go by and she doesn't return—then the story will be in print."

"How is it that everybody else's scandal *has* to come out public, and these Harrisons can do what they please and not a line?" inquired Mrs. Clayton wrathfully. "When Mr. Clayton failed in nineteen-two we had headlines as big as a house. Well, anyhow, everybody knows the Harrisons have split, newspapers or no newspapers. Deliver me, Matilda! but she was a stuck-up. Muriel and I went to see her at Siatuxit, and she treated us as if we were *contagious*."

"Didn't I go, too?" exclaimed Matilda. "Don't tell me *what*."

"The truth of it is," said Mrs. Clayton, "this Mrs. Harrison sickened when she found she couldn't get in with the high mucky-mucks."

"Goodness, mother! How horrid!"

"Look here, Muriel—don't you come with any airs on your own mother," said the exasperated Mrs. Clayton. "You're getting so *gracious-me* lately

DEFEAT FOR THE VICTOR 379

that there's no standing you. Furthermore, when I discuss the Harrisons, I propose to use the language I choose — and it doesn't come any too strong at that."

"Bully for you, Mrs. Clayton," shouted Matilda.

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Ralph Brewster came to the Court House to extend his sympathies to the sheriff; beyond this the late disaster was not mentioned. Brewster appeared not a whit downcast. In his view, the sting of the Harrison victory was mitigated by the fact that there was no Jack Harrison afield to profit by it. Jack Harrison as a factor of any sort had been obliterated by events. Best of all, the way to Alice Lane was clear of this obstacle. But Brewster realized that this was not quite the time to seek her out; he soon departed wringing the sheriff's hand in an intimate, consolatory way.

A few weeks later, however, he accidentally came upon Alice as she was walking home. Her face was pallid; her eyes, dim and sunken.

"May I walk with you?" he asked, realizing that the opportunity for which he wished had presented itself.

"Yes." Her answer was spiritless — without portent of any kind.

It was a gray, dull day, with the autumn winds at play among the leaves. They walked through quiet

side streets, the way being chosen by Brewster ; she drifted along without the least manifestation of interest. Brewster was full of subjects of a light vein, in sympathetic acknowledgment of her dejection, as well as from a sharp perception of its cause. . . . They had reached the Court House steps.

" May I see you again, Miss Lane? "

At this, she seemed to rouse herself from torpor.

" No, Mr. Brewster. I have no desire to see you — any one, in fact."

She raised her eyes to his and shook her head. He noticed that her cheeks were quite pale.

" Is *the blow* as devastating as that? " he asked.

" The blow? You mean Mr. Harrison's leaving? . . . It meant much to me."

" But he is lost to you now, Miss Lane."

" Yes, but no one shall gain by that. . . . John Harrison has left behind that which is sacred to me — the memory of his courage and his sacrifice of self. The escape of the prisoners would have meant disgrace to the name of Lane, dishonor to the name of Harrison. He prevented that. He has been stronger than all of you — above your politics and your plots. He has fought for you against yourselves. Where is defeat in that? John Harrison has retained his soul free. . . . I gave my heart to a man of honor. I shall never regret that. Like



DEFEAT FOR THE VICTOR 381

him, I must make my sacrifice. There is nothing more to be said, Mr. Brewster."

She had mustered all her forces for this reply. Her face was like death. She bowed to Brewster, and went into the Court House.

CHAPTER XXXV

VICTORY FOR THE DEFEATED

JACK HARRISON went into his "place" and his twenty dollars a week : a drudging desk job. There were no favors coming to him. Talbot was a frigid being at best, with concerns far removed from Harrison's small sphere. Talbot's friendship ended with the day's work. A few men of the office warmed companionably, but they were married chaps, and were avid for home ease when they shut down their desks at the end of the day. The bachelors of the establishment were up to their necks in their own diversions, and gave not a thought to Harrison. He was a social soul desolate amidst the merriment of this holiday land. The air was reminiscent of Spring days perpetual; to him came a heavy lethargy of loneliness, of hope at end. There were nights when he would walk the odd, flower-lined avenues, alive to strange apprehensions. More than once he thought of suicide, but always laughed that down; he could endure a little more! He marveled at his power to absorb sorrows. But

VICTORY FOR DEFEATED 388

how long would he be able to withstand this constant pull of loneliness, these flighty fears of man left without friends?

It was with this pall hovering over him when he made the acquaintance of Mary Hulings, a quite ordinary girl as to looks and status, but a really new radiance in his desert life. Mary had been a table-mate at Baughey's, a hurly-burly down-town establishment. At Baughey's you sat eight to the board, and pitied the waiting standees. Through the passage of the common sugar, and the other proprietary table stock, Mary Hulings and Jack Harrison became acquainted. She "went to business," did Mary; secretary and archivist she called her particular place of usefulness; stenographer and file clerk, in unadorned terms. So it is to be seen that Mary had her vanity with its little transparent falsities. A diamond breastpin that contained no diamonds, and a silver reticule that was not silver, exposed poor Mary. However, she was tall, slim, stern-visaged — a no-nonsense kind of a girl, which atoned for her minor counterfeits.

They went to the park sometimes, or walked among the flowers on Sunday. He did not treat her with condescension, but with a repression, a matter-of-factness that taught her that this man was not a suitor. "No, he's just plain acquaintance, that's all," she would say to her friends at the office.

384 THE MAN WHO WON

Still Mary harbored hopes. She liked his sober talk and his "quality" appearance. As the days passed, she began to wonder about him — coming eventually to the conclusion that his past was at the root of his silence and his moods.

"You've come West for something," Mary said to him one day over their apple pie. "Most of 'em do, Mr. Harrison."

"I thought I could do better out here."

"Than you had been doing?"

"Yes."

Harrison blushed.

"It was a girl!" exclaimed Mary Hulings.
"Oh, Mr. Harrison!"

That put an end to Mary Hulings. Thereafter Harrison lunched elsewhere than at Baughey's.

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Christmas came. The day was Harrison's to do as he pleased. To him Christmas had always been associated with cold, snow, a fur-robed Santa, winter gifts of mufflers, sleds and arctics. Here Christmas was Springtime — devoid of its wintry properties dear to memory. Men, hatless, were working in front yards. His thoughts drifted back to the joys he had known on this day. He felt himself an ill-fated outcast. To be alone on Christmas Day — what surer proof of man's desolation, and lack of love!

VICTORY FOR DEFEATED 385

He went into a modest lunch room on a side street for his dinner. He had been visiting this place ever since Mary Huling's inquisitiveness had banned Baughey's from him. A little waitress bade him "Merry Christmas!" and then set out napkin and ice water for him. He ordered the famous holiday dinner talked of and advertised these many days, which looked quite pitiable when brought in. The china was thick, the gravy burnt, the stuffing cold.

"Never mind bringing in the plum pudding, Sarah. Just black coffee," he said.

Harrison sat and mused. Near him were five or six forlorn individuals, evidently subjects of boarding houses, who had come here as a holiday treat. The stuffing and the gravy were going hard with them, too. There was no talking, no laughter; just the monotonous din of plates. All the diners had the same story: no family and no home this day. While the remainder of the world made merry in joyful company, these individuals were seated before a mockery of a dinner, to be eaten in the silence.

Sarah brought in the coffee, but Harrison did not taste it. Tears stood in his eyes. His throat was full. Here, on Christmas Day, in this dolorous side-street restaurant, he admitted his spirit beaten.

He rose to go, but there was a hand on his shoulder, a trembling, detaining hand.

386 THE MAN WHO WON

It was his father, older by ten years in appearance — a change to shock and to draw pity.

“Jack — son — I’ve come to take you back home. . . . Emily has gone —”

The elder Mr. Harrison sat down at the table and mopped his face. It was plain that the man of iron had come to wreck. The eyes had lost their calm, level glance. This was no warrior to lead his fellows. This was a man to make compromises, to seek peace. In Jack Harrison’s heart the old resentments were stilled. There was nothing to do but to take his place by his father’s side. Scores were settled and checked off in the twinkling of an eye.

They went back to the hotel where Edward Harrison had registered that very morning. For hours they talked of what the future was to hold for them. It was as if these plans had been fixed for ages. The father was to go South with his doctor some weeks before taking his seat in Congress. Jack was to resume his secretaryship with added powers. And the *Galeville Eagle*? — here on the table lay the deed of ownership in Jack Harrison’s name, recorded before his father had set foot on the train for the Coast.

“And another thing . . .” said the senior Harrison, smiling wanly. “I’ve seen the young lady, Miss Lane, and told her all about my coming out here — about everything, in fact. You see, I

VICTORY FOR DEFEATED 387

thought I couldn't do anything better than straighten out *that* affair, too, seeing that I was bent on repairing *all* damages. . . . Well, she and I became conspirators — a pretty pair against you, eh, Jack? Let me say that you're in her thoughts always; she prays for you — think of it! — and I — I sort of feel that she's the girl for you, if you're so minded to — ”

“ She's the girl for me,” answered Jack Harrison with the simplicity of full truth.

Jack propped a pillow back of his father's head, and took a seat at his side. Edward Harrison was touched by his son's ministrations: the boy's love for him was to be his prop and sustenance in the days to come. A feeling of rest, a sense of security against ills crept over the sick man. He closed his eyes; images of past incidents flew before him — he was thinking of the recent weeks which had cost him his wife and his son.

Jack placed a coverlet over his father's knees, and tiptoed to the door.

“ Don't go, Jack. I'm not sleeping. . . . Let us talk. A cigar and a match, son. . . . Let's see — where was I prowling? Oh, yes; I know. It was this, Jack: I was thinking of how I had misunderstood you and your motives — how you had been moved by standards that were wholesome, and how I had viewed everything with an eye political and

selfish. No wonder we drifted apart. Why, if I had known you as I know you now, I'd never have offered you those law examination questions. Do you see? I presumed that you'd do the *tricky* thing, just because I would have done it were I in your predicament. And that jail escape — the fact that you were there to prevent it counteracted the very strong suspicion that I had planned it. And I had; the truth won't hurt now. You saved me, though I damned you for your act at the time. I was too full of my own power and daring to realize my wickedness. That's it, son — wickedness. Why, I would have gone to the edge of murder to win. Mine was the old way and the wrong way. That day is over now. The strong-arm and the double-cross are doomed in politics."

Edward Harrison puffed hard at his cigar for a moment or two, and then resumed:

"It's hard to be honest in public life, but I believe a man like you, Jack, could lead the way. You've shown me how to be honest, and you proved to me that it pays. Victory isn't worth self-degradation, and that's what you demonstrated when you told Jim Fulton that you wouldn't contest my seizure of the *Eagle*. . . . Why, boy, you have had the long head all the way through. You went away from Telford City looking small to me, but you're coming back, in my estimation, the biggest

VICTORY FOR DEFEATED 889

man I know. There's a new régime coming in Telford City, and they won't need me"—the eyes of the old fighter grew moist—"but they can use you. There'll be a place for you high up, and what little good your dad has done in the town will help you. . . . Lord! this cigar tastes good to me. I guess I'm getting better."

"But you *have* done a great deal of good, father," Jack interposed spiritedly.

"Well—then so much the better for you. I'm planning your campaign now."

The elder Mr. Harrison smiled as he put his hand about his son's shoulder.

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The march of the weeks brought along incidents quite tinged with magic. Jack Harrison was again seated in the archaic parlor of the Court House, his body somewhat relaxed in a hair-cloth rocker. He was comfortable—more comfortable than on his former visits, due to the fact that he had been regularly established upon the footing of suitor. That little matter had been settled between himself and the Sheriff. The Sheriff being a politician, even in his anger, had seen that an alliance between his daughter and the restored, rehabilitated son of the Congressman, was not to be avoided or refused. The Sheriff was in the closing months of his term, and had been marked by his party for a permanent

shelving. He had nothing to turn to for a living but politics, and where could he find a likelier place to obtain further spoils — luscious minority pickings — than at the disposal of the victorious Edward Harrison? *They* might be grandfathers together! . . . So Seth Lane had given his blessing; and figured that his daughter Alice would go to Washington after all — in the train and retinue of his late opponent. Conditions, while painful to contemplate at times, could be worse, far worse. Therefore he smoked his evening pipe in considerable contentment, pondering over the astounding cleverness of his daughter Alice in bringing so much order and happiness out of the late disastrous storm.

Seth Lane was content to sit in the adjoining room and smoke, leaving to Miss Alice and Jack Harrison the freedom of the parlor which his good judgment told him was quite necessary to their present state. Only Mrs. Lane hovered by the door, or ambled in to tinker with the lamps — preserving the fictions of chaperonage much to the Sheriff's disgust. He whispered to her hoarsely: "M'ria, git out of that!" She subsided for a time only to return to her post of duty under guise of bringing the window shades at trim.

Visitors were announced. In came a young lady of undoubted robust body, who had indeed a distinguished, pretty air. She was smiling, and show-

VICTORY FOR DEFEATED 391

ing dimples, and had seeming cause for spirits so high. The *cause* was quite thin, and melancholy-looking, but known in private to possess a smile which dispelled this expression of gloom, and a roistering conversation. In short, this was Mr. Knowles of New York, who had formally besought Eva Wilcox in marriage, and whose due acceptance has "made a man of me, b'gad, with something to live for besides *the next drink*,"—Knowles' own words. In fact, Knowles had undergone the difficult moral acrobatics known as "straightening out"; had forsworn bachelor friends and failings, and was now devoted solely to the virtuous task of making ready for the wondrous second of February. In pursuance of which virtuous and delightful task, he and his bride-to-be had come to take counsel with John Harrison and Alice Lane, who were similarly situated so far as intentions were concerned, although they had not come to the matter of Date, notwithstanding that they had settled upon Minister, Flowers, Champagne, the Breakfast and Honeymoon. Mrs. Lane registered objections against the champagne, but the Sheriff had stilled actual revolt on her part with his dictum: "M'ria, this ain't your weddin', so you let up!" . . . Yes, Mr. Knowles and Miss Wilcox had come to take counsel with their brother- and sister-in-perpetration, and the four soon were en-

gaged in a highly animated conversation, in which the young women were in plain ecstasies, and the young men a bit elevated above their usual composure.

"Just think — we're going to invite only fifty," bubbled Eva. "Leigh insists on keeping the list down."

"I contend that one doesn't know more than fifty good people. In the present state of morals, forty would be nearer it," said Knowles with a sad upward roll of the eyes. "But I'll allow a margin of ten for suspicious but unproved cases."

"But you're getting in yourself, Mr. Knowles," suggested Alice.

The lines of his sharp face tightened.

"Yes," he said, "by some rule or understanding, the victim is always permitted to be present at his own execution. How else —"

"Look here, Leigh, we've come to talk sense," his bride-elect avowed.

His answer was a playful slapping of her hand, followed by the very serious taking into possession of the hand, and retaining it, in his own clasp.

"You were talking of lace over something, were you not, Miss Lane?" asked Knowles, with glum, lengthened face.

Being thus reminded, Alice continued with her "lace over something" and its associated topics,

VICTORY FOR DEFEATED 893

which, though so much bewildering Hottentot to the two men, they listened to patiently, with now and then an inkling of the abstruse meaning. But the evening was not passed in gossip so sartorial. By and by the sheriff drove Mrs. Lane off to bed, and followed, closing the intervening doors with a reassuring slam. Then Jack Harrison piled logs upon the parlor fire, subdued the lamp lights, and moved over a settee for four.

Knowles, bold and unabashed, began by detailing how he had succumbed to Eva's charms, narrating all the symptoms and stages. "B'gad, she *had* me the first time I saw her standing in the doorway at Stilson's. I knew she was the one, *whoever* she was." Which brought from Eva the statement that, contrarily, she was not impressed by Knowles on sight, but that he grew upon her until he was without flaw or failure.

"I grew and grew," chimed in Knowles, "until now, in the blindness of her affection, she thinks I weigh one hundred and ninety instead of one twenty-eight. That's love."

"Well, didn't you say I looked quite slender in black?" declared Eva.

"And you, Mr. Harrison the silent,—how did you happen to fall into this interesting situation?" inquired Knowles, who sought other reminiscences after his own full confession.

Jack Harrison smiled and looked at the fire.

"It was with a girl in a house apron I fell in love," he said, not taking his eyes from the crackling logs. "Odd — having seen 'em in ball gowns, and thousand-dollar furs, and bathing suits, without a heart flutter — to fall for the apron. . . . Well, you see, it was so comfortable lounging here, and she looked so wonderful,— and I was so blamed lonesome . . . living single . . . without her . . . and she brought up some elderberry wine and apples — and I said, 'Boy, this is the lady who ~~should~~ be sitting at *your* dining-room table,' . . . so ~~that~~ I really —"

"Was the wine strong?" broke in Knowles.

"Leigh!" cried Eva.

"Wouldn't it have broken the spell if she had gone down cellar just for kerosene and onions?" continued Knowles.

"No," replied Jack Harrison. "I think the house apron would have saved that situation — or anything. Alice Lane with a basket of onions would be Alice Lane still."

There was great laughter then, with Alice flushing scarlet and snuggling a bit closer to her chosen partner in life. Knowles piled more wood on the fire, incidentally observing that he was having about the best hour of his life. The time had flown amazingly. Eva exclaimed that they must be going



VICTORY FOR DEFEATED 895

as it was getting late. The young women stood with arms entwined for quite some minutes, and kissed each other most affectionately.

“John doesn’t go until eleven-thirty these nights,” said Alice, explaining that young man’s rather proud and officious tarrying.

“Oh, I know,” laughed Eva from the walk. “*I know.*”

Then Alice and Jack laughed, too, and closed the door.

THE END



GO, GET 'EM!

By William A. Wellman

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